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HOLT CASTLE
OR
THE THREE-FOLD INTEREST
IN THE LAND

PROFESSOR HENRY TANNER.
F. C. S.



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HOLT CASTLE

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HOLT CASTLE

OR THE

THREE-FOLD INTEREST IN THE LAND.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE earlier works of this series were intended to indicate and describe the several advantages which are resulting from the more extended study of the Principles of Agriculture. As the work progressed, opportunity offered for making it evident that the duties of the farm are, or should be, shared in by the wife and daughters of the farmer. It has been the Author's desire in the present work—which originally appeared in a series of contributions to 'The Preston Guardian'—to draw attention to some of the many advantages resulting from an intelligent performance of the whole of these duties. An endeavour has also been made to show, that in each class interested in the land—whether as owners,

as occupiers, or as labourers—woman's influence is a powerful and most valuable agency, which is too often disregarded, and which has rarely been sufficiently utilised.

LONDON, *May*, 1882.

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HOLT CASTLE;

OR,

THE THREE-FOLD INTEREST IN THE LAND.

CHAPTER I.

A new Land Agent enters upon Duty—The Landlord desires the Promotion of Joint Interests—A Tenancy Surrendered and Rent Paid without Occupation—Science Indicates previous Cause of Loss, and the Remedy—New Tenant and Increased Rental.

THE appointment of a new land agent upon a large estate, is of necessity a matter of great moment to all who may be associated on it. It is a serious responsibility for any person undertaking such a duty, for he has to hold the balance of justice impartially, acting fairly and equitably with the several interests which have to be dealt with. The difficulty of the position is increased by the fact, that as the agent of the estate, he is paid by one of the parties interested in the administration of affairs. He is paid to protect the landlord's special interests, but generally with the injunction that he must do so with due regard to the interests of the tenants and the labourers. The position of the agent is thus rendered more trying and responsible,

hence a determination to administer the affairs of the estate equitably, as between man and man—and one of those men, his employer, by whose favour he holds his position—gives a very severe test to his determination to act fairly and honestly towards all. It requires a considerable amount of confidence on the part of the landowner to give his agent full power to administer the affairs of his estate, guided simply and purely by an even-handed justice. Happy should that landlord be who possesses an agent worthy of the trust, and who has sufficient confidence in his agent to leave him such freedom of action that his duties may be faithfully fulfilled.

Mr. Ernest Henry Woodford, the proprietor of the Holt Castle Estate, had but recently notified to Mr. John Holmes, one of his tenants, and occupying The Abbotts Farm, that he had selected him for carrying on the management of his property. Mr. Woodford had had very favourable opportunities for judging of his skill in farming, and his thorough integrity in business, hence the vacancy having been offered to Mr. Holmes, it had been accepted, and the time for his first official interview had now arrived.

“It has given me much pleasure,” said Mr. Woodford, “to make you an offer of my agency, and, as I informed you by letter, it is my sincere desire to see the interests of the Landlord, the Tenant, and the Labourer more generally and more permanently strengthened. I know that you have been successful in the management of your farm, and that your education at Rodney College will greatly assist you in your very varied duties, but I have still more confidence in your habitual determination to act in a thoroughly straightforward and honest manner.

I am pleased that you have accepted the duties, and I hope you may long have health and strength to perform them. We shall be leaving the Castle for three or four weeks, and by the time of our return you will be fairly settled into your work."

The business details were soon arranged in a manner satisfactory to both, and it was with no ordinary feelings of pleasure that Mr. Holmes thanked Mr. Woodford for the confidence which had been reposed in him. Before he left the Castle, however, Mrs. Woodford had also an opportunity of informing Mr. Holmes, that he would enter upon his duties with her very best wishes, and also with her deepest sympathies for the success of the various efforts she knew he would make, for helping the Tenantry and the Labourers on the Estate, to a greater measure of prosperity and comfort than they then enjoyed. Mr. Holmes consequently commenced the duties of his position with much encouragement from his employers, and with a firm resolve to do his duty in the protection of the owner's interests with firmness and energy; but he determined to be at all times watchful that these should never be advanced by injustice or wrong.

Mr. Holmes' first duty was to arrange for the removal of the Estate documents from the residence of the late agent—Mr. Thompson—whose failing health compelled his early departure for the Southern coast. An accumulation of work awaited his attention, for little had been attended to during Mr. Thompson's illness, other than that which the office clerk could manage on his own responsibility. Two conclusions forced themselves upon Mr. Holmes' mind before that day came to an end. First, that there ought to be an official residence for the Agent of that

Estate, with proper offices near; secondly, that he would be obliged to devote his time, fully and without interruption, to the care of the property. As he happened to have the blessing of a wife, who took as much interest in her husband's work as he did himself, we can well understand how cordially Janet aided him in giving the position of matters a very full and fair consideration. The result was that they decided to give up The Abbotts Farm, as soon as circumstances were favourable for its being done, and thus enable Mr. Holmes to devote himself unreservedly to the duties of his position. In addition to this, the house in which Mr. Thompson had resided did not belong to the Estate, and it was in many respects inconveniently situated, besides which it had no proper provision for the safe custody of the important documents belonging to such a property.

The Holt Castle Estate consisted of about 12,000 acres, which lay together with tolerable compactness, and had been purchased by the father of the present owner from the Talbot family, by whom it had been previously held for many centuries. In addition to this estate, some smaller properties in the south of England came under the same general supervision. It represented a general income of rather more than £18,000 a year, and the property had the great advantage of being entirely free from mortgages and settlements, which so commonly fetter the powers of the landowner, and check him in helping his tenantry in the manner he desires. Mrs. Woodford's income was received under a settlement, charged upon some estates in Cheshire, but the care of this property did not in any way add to the duties devolving upon Mr. Holmes. The estate which came under the care of the

new agent was a very fine property, offering an abundant range for an intelligent management; and giving full scope for much skill and experience.

Amongst the various matters awaiting the agent's early attention, was an application from a tenant desirous of giving up the lease of a seven-acre field which he had taken for making bricks. Three years of that lease were unexpired, but the tenant had so completely failed in his attempt to manufacture a good quality brick, that he was desirous of paying the three years' rent (£180) and thus release himself from further care of the land. There was little difficulty in complying with the request, and the lease was accordingly cancelled. The facts of the case were soon looked into by Mr. Holmes, who took home with him samples of the defective bricks, and samples of the clay for examination. It soon became evident that the bricks were injured for sale by the presence of lime in the brick-earth, which during the burning in the kiln became changed into quick-lime. The result of this was, that those portions of the lime which became exposed to the air absorbed moisture, and burst off some of the surface, making the faces of the bricks rough and irregular. Mr. Holmes saw at once that this was entirely due to the presence of lime. This had been fatal to all hopes of using it for bricks, and hence the cause of the tenant's failure in the attempt.

It was very natural that he should then test the clay, and see in what form the lime existed in it, but to his surprise there was no lime in it. In fact, its examination proved that it was a very perfect brick-earth. Here, then, there was a mystery to be unravelled, and again the bricks and the clay were tested, but with the same results. The

following day gave opportunities for another visit to the land, and samples of earth and clay were taken in various directions. These samples explained the mystery, for, on examination, it was shown that, whilst all the clay was perfectly free from lime, there was an abundance of lime in the surface soil. It was therefore tolerably evident that the soil must have been the cause of the mischief, and a further examination of the field showed that in digging out the clay the men had allowed the surface soil to run amongst it. In the preparation of the clay for brick-making the lime thus became well intermixed with it, and damaged it for its use in this manufacture. The remedy was very obvious as soon as the cause of trouble had been discovered.

An inquiry may possibly be made—How was it that Mr. Holmes became qualified to carry out these examinations of the bricks, clay, and soil? It will probably be sufficient to say that his education in Rodney College had familiarised his mind with research, so that the necessary examinations presented no difficulty. The value of such knowledge was shown in a marked degree, immediately he entered upon the responsible care of an estate, for it enabled him to grapple with a difficulty which had much mystery about it. Here was an instance of the tenant, a man of capital and enterprise, carrying on a business for four years with heavy loss, and finally surrendering the holding, paying down three years' rent to clear himself from the lease of the land. When the matter was looked into by a person who was able to investigate the difficulty with proper skill, the cause of the trouble reveals itself, and the remedy is one of the simplest possible character.

Having this new light thrown upon the subject, Mr.

Holmes naturally directed his attention to the proper utilisation of this valuable bed of clay. Samples of the clay were sent to various potteries for the purpose of testing its quality, and it ultimately proved to be of special excellence for the very best bricks, and for making sewer pipes of large diameter. This resulted in an offer of £200 a year being made on a 14 years' lease, by thoroughly responsible men, for this piece of land, upon which three years' rental of £60 per annum had already been paid up as a penalty for being released from further loss.

This early incident in his official career was very naturally a source of much satisfaction to himself, as well as to his well-wishers. It was just one of those cases in which an intelligent mind is sometimes able to make a very simple improvement, which immediately more than repays all the expenses of a good educational career, and to which may be traced that light which guided towards a solution of the mystery. In his practice as a farmer, Mr. Holmes had derived great advantages by reason of the education in science which he had secured, but in entering upon the broader path of estate management his opportunities for usefulness were increasing. He did not stand alone in this respect, for any one who is able to look a little deeper than others into the difficulties of every-day life is well prepared for helping others, and for securing the promotion of his own interests thereby. Instances similar to the foregoing naturally encourage youth in the pursuit of science instruction, and the result is very generally a bright intelligent mind, which renders the performance of duty a constant source of pleasure. In cases of business difficulty, the well-trained mind will often suggest a

simple modification which economises the cost of production, or which improves the result, so that the thought or suggestion represents considerable wealth, verifying the truth—

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.

CHAPTER II.

Private Enterprise of Agent Subordinated to Estate Requirements
—Severance of existing Ties with Labourers' Families—The
Landlord and Tenants become better acquainted—Value of
Sympathy—Inspection of various Farms—Agent's Duty to
Landlord Consistent with Justice to Tenantry.

THE duties of office would not permit of any delay in making proper arrangements for the Abbotts Farm, and Mr. Holmes naturally called into the consultation his father, who occupied the Holt Farm, and his brother-in-law—Charlie Webster—who held the Manor House Farm, both of which farms adjoined the Abbotts. The result of that consultation was, that any immediate change of residence was found impossible, that his father had no wish to extend his duties—but rather the reverse—and that Charlie Webster should forthwith take the responsible care of the Abbotts, and continue to do so as long as it was necessary for Mr. Holmes to reside in that house. This arrangement enabled Mr. Holmes to feel satisfied that he need not in any way divert his attention from the affairs of the estate, by reason of any anxiety about the progress of matters on his farm.

There was no necessity for securing help for the oversight of the labourers, so far, at least, as regarded their domestic condition. This had been so fully watched over,

that the details had now become matters of course, and their care had been reduced to a regular system by Mrs. Holmes. The difficulties which Janet had to encounter in earlier days were now matters of memory only, for the labourers, their wives, and children were as much "at home" on the Abbots Farm as the tenant himself. Their gardens, cows, and pigs prospered under the careful guardianship by which they had been introduced, and the labourers knew full well to whom they were indebted for an entirely new condition of life. Janet could never forget the first gathering of the labourers' wives at her house, nor Mary Murch's reply to one of her inquiries:—


"Bless you, ma'am," said she, "the like of we be thankful if we can live, but we can't save anything, 'tis enough sometimes to keep body and soul together."

Without any gifts—which she regarded as having a tendency to pauperise the mind—she had, with her husband's assistance, helped these people to help themselves. To these labourers and their families a return to the old state of things was now simply impossible, for it would have been unbearable after once tasting the comforts of a healthy house and good supplies of food. So long, then, as Janet resided at the Abbots Farm, her watchful care was assured to them, and her husband's absence would not affect their welfare.

The first time Janet visited the cottages of the labourers after the arrangement had taken place, to which reference has been made, many an anxious inquiry arose. Was Mr. Holmes going to give up the Abbots Farm? Were they to lose their kind mistress and friend? Would they take Mr. Thompson's house and go so far away from them? They knew the value of the privileges they had

been helped to secure, and the fearful thought struck their minds that their good friend might have to leave them. Janet allayed their fears, and expressed the hope that what had been done for them might now be done for others also, but without any sacrifice on their parts. Great as had been the change in the comforts of their homes, nothing gave greater evidence of its thoroughly beneficial character, than the healthy condition of the children and their good conduct. In these cottages on the Abbots Farm there was a goodly gathering of boys and girls preparing for the duties of life, just of the right class for serving as apprentices, healthy, well-conducted, and already trained to be handy in the garden. Their help in the work going on at home had accustomed them to handle things carefully, and to be kind and gentle to animals. Hence it is that such children become familiarised to work in a good cottage home, and this gives them a great advantage over other children who have never possessed an equally favourable opportunity.

One of the great difficulties connected with obtaining good farm labourers and valuable domestic servants, has long been recognised as arising from the want of a proper educational career. Ordinary school education has been steadily extending, and has already attained great excellence, but whilst this has made boys and girls better scholars, it has not been sufficient, of itself, to give the more perfect education which is so greatly needed. The education of the home has too often been of an unfavourable character, because those homes were not only unfit habitations, but they encouraged objectionable habits of life. Disobedience to parents naturally prepared the way for disobedience to others, and this interfered with the



happiness, usefulness, and general prosperity of many of the rising generation. It was for this reason that so many objected to receive boys and girls as apprentices, whereby they might be thoroughly well trained for their duties in life, and thus become trustworthy and valuable servants. On the Abbotts Farm they had recommenced the system of apprenticeship, both for boys and girls, and it was working in a satisfactory manner. They had by raising their labourers to positions of comfort and happiness, secured a group of children, strong and healthy in body, hearty, willing helpers in the garden and with live stock. Another link in the chain was thus being formed, and it was a necessity of the case, for, however desirable a system may be, it can only be carried out successfully by the aid of suitable materials.

In addition to the every-day duty of the Estate, the question of the residence for the Agent had to be settled in detail, so that the Squire's approval might be obtained on his return to the Castle. After a careful consideration of the several localities, a site was selected adjoining the Wrexborough road, near the Leaside entrance to the Park. The situation was exceedingly agreeable and healthy, it was very convenient of access, and it had the especial advantage of being within easy reach of the Castle. Under Mr. Thompson's administration of the Estate—and he had held it for several years before the present owner came into possession—the intercourse between the owner and the occupiers of the land was exceedingly limited. The Squire would occasionally ride over a farm, and have a casual conversation with the tenant, but here their communications generally ended. The rent was paid as a matter of course, and those rentals

were generally moderate, having very rarely been advanced. Mr. Thompson had generally met the tenants' requirements; there was seldom anything unfair in the performance of the existing contracts or arrangements, but still there was a deficiency, and this Mr. Holmes hoped gradually to remove.

He felt that there was a want of sympathy between the Squire and his tenants, and although it did not directly involve any pecuniary considerations, yet he knew that it was a source of weakness which should be rectified as soon as possible. In his own relations with the Squire he had been exceptionally situated, and there had been a great freedom of intercourse. Other tenants had observed the difference, and it caused many remarks to be made, which showed that they wished for more intimate relations with the landlord. This absence of a cordial sympathy was more apparent than real, for it has been shown that the Squire and his wife both desired its promotion. The estate offices being near the castle was considered to be a step in the right direction, and as there was about twenty acres held in hand at the point already described, there was nothing to prevent its being selected for the purposes proposed.

As soon as Mr. Woodford returned the suggestion was placed before him, and an explanation given of the reasons which led to the choice of the site. Mr. Holmes also took the opportunity of showing that the cost of these advantages had been provided by one of the earliest transactions on the estate, for by solving the mystery about the brick-yard he had secured an increased rental of £140 a year for the land. The Squire was greatly pleased with the proposal in reference to the estate offices

and the agent's residence, and also with the successful issue respecting the brick-yard. It appeared that this had been a continual source of annoyance for nearly three years, and yet no one had pointed out the true cause of the difficulty, hence the mystery continued. The simple character of the remedy rendered the past mystery all the more tantalising, for all that was necessary was the complete removal of the surface soil. The Squire heartily approved of the policy of being brought into closer personal relations with the tenantry of the estate, and promised to give it his cordial support. The several details were forthwith arranged, and were duly advanced in the usual course of business.

One of the Agent's early visits was paid to the farm occupied by Mr. Thomas Forbes.

"I am glad to congratulate you on becoming our Agent," said Mr. Forbes. "When you last paid me a visit of inspection, you came as a friend to advise with me about my difficulties, so I hope, now that you are in a position to help me, you will do so."

"I do not suppose that I shall have any reason to regret anything I then advised," said the Agent, "and if I can fairly help you, I certainly will do so. Has anything been done since then?"

"The only thing which has been done," said Mr. Forbes, "is the payment of the rent, out of which I had five shillings thrown back instead of a dinner. Mr. Thompson promised to come and see what we wanted, but there it ended. You know that when you came before I was then losing half a rental, but you pointed out how the cheese was being injured by the foul air in the cow-sheds, and the bad water the cows had to drink,

and things have improved greatly, but this shedding ought to be put into a better condition, and we want better water also."

"If I remember rightly," said Mr. Holmes, "you were very much in favour of having your cow-sheds kept rather too warm."

"Well, that is true," said Mr. Forbes, "but since you mentioned to me about the necessity for fresh air, I have noticed that my most troublesome cases have always been those cows which were furthest from the fresh air. I give in there, and would like the boarding to be so done, that we can give even more air all through the shedding."

"That being the case," said Mr. Holmes, "we shall be able to agree upon what is necessary; and now as to the yard and the water supply."


"I have made a temporary arrangement about the water, but it is only half done," said Mr. Forbes, "and as to the yard, well, I lose a lot of manure every year which ought to go on the land instead of being wasted."

"This shall certainly be rectified," said the Agent, "and I am very glad that my views prove to be the same, whether I am in office, or out of office. It shows that we ought to be careful in giving advice even to our friends. I then spoke as a friendly adviser, and I am glad to say that, in my official position as agent for Mr. Woodford, it is my duty not only to protect his interest in a fair and proper manner, but I hope that I shall never forget that it is equally my duty to assist his tenantry, in that which will promote their prosperity. It is with these feelings that I have entered upon my official duties."

CHAPTER III.

Rent Dinner in the Castle—The Landlord's "Harvest Home"—A Tenant's Sympathy with his Labourers Influenced by the Landlord's Sympathy with his Tenant—The Wives of the Tenantry Meet to Consider their Duties—Mutual Obligations Acknowledged—Pulling in the same Boat.

THE approaching rent audit offered a very favourable opportunity for Mr. Woodford to make himself more fully acquainted with his tenantry, and they were accordingly invited to dine at Holt Castle on the occasion. The rent was received at the Talbot Hotel, Wrexborough, and the business was completed in time for an adjournment to the Castle at the appointed hour. The grand old Gothic hall was probably never filled with a more hearty and festive group, than that evening assembled in response to the Squire's invitation. It was a great pleasure to the host to welcome around him so many helpers and contributors to his prosperity, and it was only equalled by the satisfaction and gratification of those who were the guests of the evening. The dinner was worthy of the occasion, but it was served without any unnecessary display. An air of comfort and happiness pervaded the company, and rarely have a party of 70 gathered around the festive board under more pleasant circumstances. The Squire



presided, and the Agent occupied the vice-chair. After the usual complimentary toasts, "The health of the Squire and his family" was proposed by the oldest tenant, and duly honoured by the company. In acknowledging their hearty good wishes, the Squire said :—

"It is with no ordinary pleasure that I see you assembled here to-day, because it is my sincere desire to do all in my power to promote your interests, and those of the labourer. I regret that from a series of circumstances which we need not now dwell upon, I have had so little intercourse with you, but Mr. Holmes is evidently determined that this shall be avoided in the future. I desire to regard this gathering very much as you do your own 'Harvest Home,' when tenants and labourers rejoice together over the successful in-gathering of the fruits of the earth. I, on my part, have also to look upon this gathering as my 'Harvest Home,' at which, through the enterprise, capital, and—last but not least—the goodwill of my tenantry, I have received my share of the produce of the soil. I desire to co-operate with you, as far as I have the power, in promoting your success and the welfare of those on whom you have to rely. I trust that, whether it be at your 'Harvest Home' or mine, we may ever be ready to welcome the toast of 'the three-fold interest in the land,' or success to Landlord, Tenant, and Labourer. In thanking you for your good wishes to myself and family, I now ask you to drink 'Success to the three-fold interest in the land.'"


The health of the Agent was subsequently most cordially received, and more especially as the Squire stated that the present happy gathering had been suggested by him. Mr. Holmes expressed his hopes that it would be

the means of encouraging that hearty co-operation, without which the occupation of the land could not be rendered satisfactory to those who were interested in its success. This gathering at the Castle was certainly effective, in commencing that growth of kindly sympathy between Landlord and Tenant, which Mr. Holmes had found to be wanting, and it had now to be watched over and carefully encouraged.

Not many days after the visit of the Tenantry to the Castle, Mrs. Woodford called at the Abbotts Farm to see Janet, and the conversation naturally turned upon the subject of this gathering, in the promotion of which both of them had privately had a share.

"It has often been a wonder to me," said Mrs. Woodford, "that my husband never had the rent audit dinner at the Castle, but I know Mr. Thompson was fearful of too great freedom arising from our doing so. We are both very pleased that the reserve has been broken through."

"I am sure it will help my husband in the work before him," said Janet. "He wants to see the Tenants taking a warmer interest in their Labourers, and this will scarcely be accomplished without the example of the Landlord. A cold upper layer of water is scarcely consistent with a warm current beneath, for if the relations between the Landlord and the Tenant practically terminate with the payment of rent, it naturally encourages the relations between the Tenant and the Labourer to terminate with the payment of wages. If a warm sympathy can be established between the Landlord and his Tenantry, they will have kinder feelings and more consideration for those who work for them."



"Do you then consider that the cordial sympathy of these different classes, depends so much upon the upper class of society?" inquired Mrs. Woodford.

"Yes," said Janet, "their influence is great, whether it be exerted in favour of, or against, any such a movement; but no one rejoices more than I do, to see the Squire and yourself helping forward an extension of this kindly sympathy, which is really the cement of society."

"I never took that view of it, I must confess," said Mrs. Woodford; "possibly I am neglecting some good influence which I can exercise. If so, pray tell me."

"Man's influence upon the various relations of society is great," said Janet, "but I think that woman's influence is even greater, provided she uses that influence prudently. Its power and beneficial character depend greatly upon the prudence by which it is guided. If this be so, and if we have to establish something deeper and more penetrating than money payments, then we must not disregard woman's influence. You must excuse me, then, if I say that you can exercise a very powerful influence, by bringing into action the warm-hearted sympathy of the wives of the tenantry."

"But this is never done, is it?" asked Mrs. Woodford.

"I cannot give you any instances of its being done," said Janet, "but of its influence I have no doubt."

"Well, then, tell me how you would proceed in the work," said Mrs. Woodford.

"I should invite them to the Castle some afternoon, and ask them to give you their opinions as to the best means for helping the families of the labourers," said Janet.

"But do you think they could give any sound opinions upon the subject?"

"In some few cases you would probably secure some new and useful suggestions," said Janet, "but you would arouse the interest of all, and it is very certain that all would gather information. There would be a healthy sort of emulation established, the fruits of which would become more abundant in each succeeding year."

"If you will help me," said Mrs. Woodford, "I will endeavour to carry it out."

"My help will be very cheerfully rendered," said Janet, "but I must ask you to allow my help to glide in as imperceptibly as possible, and simply to supply any need which may arise, rather than to become prominent."

"We can easily arrange all these details between ourselves," said Mrs. Woodford, "if my husband approves of its being done. The idea improves on acquaintance, and I really begin to like it."

The proposal was received by the Squire with a momentary surprise, and a somewhat humorous smile, but with him also it improved on acquaintance, so that ultimately it received his very cordial approval. The invitations were issued to the wives and elder daughters of the tenants. An intimation was given at the same time, that Mrs. Woodford was very desirous of learning their views and opinions in reference to any helps which were desirable for the labourers and their families.

The afternoon proved to be one of those charming days in May when Nature seemed to luxuriate in her own splendour, and when the views from Holt Castle were to be seen in their greatest perfection. Within the Castle the surroundings were characterised by a refinement of taste, and a supply of everything calculated to promote luxurious ease. It was under these agreeable circum-

stances that the condition of the labourers' lot had to be talked over, and rarely could the contrast have appeared equally forcible and striking. Janet had secured the early attendance of Mrs. Tom Hughes, of the Forest Farm, to aid her in the programme decided upon. It was felt desirable to break down as much as possible any reserve, or, may we say, shyness. Hence, as the ladies arrived they were introduced to Mrs. Woodford and her daughter, and, after a short conversation on the special subject of their meeting, they were formed into little groups of friends, and continued their exchange of views. With admirable tact and good grace, Mrs. Woodford subsequently passed from group to group, encouraging the fair discussion of points on which their opinions did not exactly coincide, and gathering the results of these conversations. With more retired manner, both Janet and Mrs. Tom Hughes were equally busy in picking up any new suggestions, and dropping some useful hints calculated to guide "the council of the fair" to happy and useful conclusions. There were no formal resolutions proposed, but it could not be doubted that each person secured a clearer knowledge of the necessities of the case during that afternoon's conversation. Each became impressed with the fact that it was her duty to endeavour, according to her power, to alleviate the difficulties with which their labourers' families had to contend.

The refreshments supplied during the afternoon certainly lacked in the solid and substantial character of the tenants' dinner, but this was more than counterbalanced by their lightness, suitability, and delicacy. Such a kind and agreeable reception had never before been known by the company who were that day received at the Castle,

and it was not likely to be quickly removed from their memories. Whether any practical advantages were likely to result still awaited the issue of the future. At any rate, the ice was effectually broken, and a sympathy of action had been established between the owners and the occupiers of the Holt Castle Estate.

Not many days after this "conference" the Squire met Mr. Holmes, and was evidently rather anxious to learn what was the general impression respecting it.

"Its indirect advantages," said Mr. Holmes, "will greatly outweigh the direct benefits arising from the 'conference.' It has produced a most favourable effect upon the minds of the tenantry, and it re-acts greatly in my favour, because they associate this recognition of themselves and their wives, as part of a new policy introduced by myself. The feeling expressed in Wrexborough market yesterday would have been most gratifying to you, and I am very hopeful that good will result."

"My wife and I," said the Squire, "feel as if we knew more of the tenants than we did before, and I think it will help us to pull together with deeper feelings of mutual interest. Some say the interests of the landlord and tenant are identical, but my candid opinion is that there is a good deal of 'cant phraseology' in the statement. I endeavour to secure a good rental, my agent is supposed to do what is reasonable and fair, therewith I have been content, but this scarcely comes up to the proper standard."


"A certain fair and reasonable rental being agreed upon," said Mr. Holmes, "I think the terms have thereby been so far settled, that the interests become so closely in correspondence that an injury to the tenant ought to be

also felt by the landlord. It is clearly to the landlord's interest that, subject to the payment of a fair rental for the use of the land, their interests should be closely identical. Thus the landlord would rejoice in his tenant's prosperity, and at the least sympathise with him in his difficulties. I am very hopeful that your kind and generous disposition may favour your seeing, in a short time, closer bonds of a joint interest than you recognise at present. If the tenants see the landlord 'pulling in the same boat' with themselves, they will work with more satisfaction than by thinking that the 'joint interests' are simply limited to a settlement of the rent for the land they occupy."

CHAPTER IV.

Inspection of Estate—An old Friend Suffers Loss—A Tenant Surrenders his Farm—His Successor Chosen—A new Tenant for The Abbotts Farm—He takes Farm Pupils—Invitations Issued to Visit the Cottages on The Abbotts Farm.

MR. HOLMES was now engaged in making a personal inspection of each tenancy on the estate, and he followed this with a report—for his own private guidance in the future—embodying his first impressions of the wants and the capabilities of each occupation. In the estate record which he was thus preparing, each occupation had its own allotted space, room being provided for any addition to the statement of facts then recorded. It familiarised his mind with the property, and constituted a work of reference of the utmost value. The arrangement which had been made for his freedom from all care respecting the farm, worked satisfactorily, and Charlie Webster showed a considerable amount of business tact in the management of the two farms. He was, in fact, daily becoming more and more familiar with the requirements of each, and the remuneration attached to his oversight of the Abbotts Farm was well and faithfully earned. The superintendence of 700 acres of land fully occupied his time and thoughts, and the time passed happily and merrily on.




It was, however, but as the bright sunshine of summer, which is suddenly shrouded by the rising thunderstorm. Mrs. Webster, on the death of her husband, Col. Horace Webster, V.C., became possessed of about £12,000, with directions that £2,000 should be settled on each of her daughters on their marriage, and £2,000 should be given to the son, Charles Webster. These directions had been strictly carried out, but as the son required a further sum of £2,000 for properly stocking the Manor House Farm, this additional sum was advanced by the mother upon her son's note of hand, which was to bear five per cent. interest. The transfer of £6,000 to the children necessarily reduced Mrs. Webster's income, and as a consequence she naturally desired as good an interest on the residue as she could secure. With this object in view she invested about £2,000 in the Splash-go Bank. She also removed her current bank account to the same company, and for safe custody she deposited her deed chest, containing documents of importance. No one for a moment doubted the prudence of the transactions, but the news of the stoppage of that Bank came as a flash of lightning which heralds a hard and bitter storm.

An attempt was quickly made to remove the deed box, but that attempt failed. An examination into the state of affairs soon showed that if Mrs. Webster sacrificed all she possessed, she would be unable to pay off the demands made upon her, for the liability attaching to her shares in the Bank. Ultimately the whole of her property, including Charles Webster's note of hand for £2,000, was directed to be realised. This necessitated his surrender of the Manor House Farm, as soon as it could be advantageously carried out. The grief of Mrs. Webster was

tempered by one satisfaction, in remembering that the £6,000 had been saved for her children, but even with this consolation it was a hard and bitter trial to her. In the affectionate solicitude of her children she found her chief comfort; for by these her every want would be affectionately provided for. In comparison with many others she knew, how very fortunate even her hard lot appeared to be. There was a misery—wide-spread and deep-searching—sad and bitter in the extreme, which as it came under her observation made her feel thankful that she had not been reduced to a deeper trial. At the time the sad news reached her, she was staying with Mrs. Nicholson, one of her married daughters, who resided at Rodney Hall, in Scotland. Here she received every comfort and sympathy which an affectionate daughter could render, whilst her husband—Professor Nicholson—did his best to relieve her from the painful business details.

One of the students from Rodney College, who had recently resided at the Holt Farm as a pupil, being anxious to take a farm under such a landlord as Mr. Woodford, applied for the Manor House Farm, and George Newbold was accepted as the new tenant. Mr. Newbold's friends resided in London, but with a view to benefit his general health, he had taken to farming as an occupation, rather to arouse him from a deep despondency which had gathered around him than as a source of income. He was rather fond of hunting, and usually kept a couple of good hunters. The Manor House Farm consequently appeared to be in every way suited to his requirements, especially as he intended to have a good bailiff to assist him in the management of the land.




When the valuation between the in-coming and the out-going tenant was completed, Charles Webster discharged the note of hand, and then had about £2,500 surplus, which was lodged in the Wrexborough Old Bank. The storm had been hard and severe, much damage had been done, but the returning sunshine enabled all to look more tranquilly upon the wreck, respecting which all were agreed that it might have been worse. Charlie Webster now took up his residence at the Abbotts Farm, and contented himself by managing this smaller breadth of land.

The new residence for the Agent was rapidly advancing towards completion, and many a thought was given to its occupation, but associated with these considerations was the breaking of many pleasing ties which rendered the Abbotts Farm especially dear to the family group. It was true that Mr. and Mrs. Holmes were about to reside only one mile from their present residence, he would still be the Agent of the property, but the Labourers would pass into the care of other persons, and, after all, the steady flow of general prosperity might be interrupted.

As Mr. and Mrs. Holmes and Charlie Webster were gathered around the table one evening, conversing upon the incidents of the day, their conversation was very unexpectedly interrupted by Charlie Webster :—

“I have been in a regular worry all day about that money of mine in the Wrexborough Bank, for if that precious concern breaks, I shall be completely done. You see by the papers that banks are terribly shaken, there is a want of confidence, and it is hard to say which may go next. I am very much disposed to draw out this coin, and try my good fortune in the Colonies again. What do you say, Jack?”




"There is very little to be said in favour of your proposal," said Mr. Holmes. "It appears to me you would encumber yourself with your money for a time, and then suddenly rush into some investment which may disappoint your hopes. If you prefer having your money invested in something which is not only safe, but is paying a moderate interest, and promises to do something more soon, become the tenant of this farm. I shall be bound to transfer it to some one, and I should like to see you follow me in its occupation."

"Yes, Charlie, you really must do that," said Janet; "let us keep together, for what is the use of your going abroad again. You can make yourself very happy and jolly here, you will be our nearest neighbour, and we shall always be able to help each other."

"I have no wish to go off," said Charlie Webster, "and especially just now, for the Mater would be sure to think that she was the cause of my doing so. She feels her loss now more than she need, but that will soften down if she sees us comfortably settled in again. Money is a terrible anxiety when you have it, and I suppose it is a still greater care when you happen to want it. Upon my word, Jack, yours is not half a bad idea. I like the Abbotts Farm, and it is now in first-rate order. I shall sleep upon the proposal, and see how it looks in the morning."

"The more you think it over, the more you will approve of it," said Janet, "and if you decide in favour of taking the Abbotts Farm, my anxieties about our people will be at an end. I shall not feel as if I were parting with them, and thereby endangering much that is now progressing towards a great success."



The following morning was awaited with anxiety, but when Charlie Webster returned from his circuit of the farm in time for breakfast, he quickly dispelled all anxiety by saying :—

“I do not think I can do better than try to arrange for the tenancy of the Abbots Farm. It is a very nice little farm, and worth its money, so I shall be able to meet your wishes, Janet, by becoming your nearest neighbour.”

“I am so very glad,” said Janet, “I am sure you are doing wisely. Now, Horace, my dear, help your little brother, and both of you kiss Uncle Charlie, and say you are glad, too, like your mother.”


Uncle Charlie soon had his little namesake on his knee, whilst Horace, standing near as his guard of honour, was fully impressed with the idea that every one was very happy about something, and that he must be happy also. When Mr. Holmes came in to join the breakfast party, he was as pleased as any one to know of the decision.

“Well, Charlie,” said he, “I heartily wish you good luck in the enterprise, and I think you have decided wisely. Your direct profits will not be as great as if you could have kept the Manor House Farm, but you can supplement it in various ways without neglecting the farm. Why do you not take two or three of the young fellows from Rodney College? If you write Nicholson, he will get your name put down on the Farm Tutors’ Board in the hall, and I am sure Dr. Thompson will help you with his good word.”

“I suppose there is plenty of accommodation, Janet, for two or three fellows to come?” inquired Charlie Webster.

"Oh, yes, there is plenty of room, and some to spare," said Janet. "You need not have any fear on that account, and Mary Dunbar will keep everything in nice order, for she is a capital housekeeper."

The completion of the arrangements for the transfer of the Abbotts Farm was soon accomplished, Mr. Woodford having given his cordial approval to the occupation passing into the hands of Mr. Charles Webster. Janet did not feel satisfied in her mind until she had called at the cottages of the farm labourers, and gave them the good news that her brother would take the farm, so that she would still be able to come and see them, just the same as ever. She then informed them that she was going to ask some friends to come and inspect their cottages, if they had no objection to her doing so, hoping that they would do something on their farms, for their labourers. They were all very pleased to meet Janet's wishes, and everything was satisfactorily arranged. Some little care was then necessary to divide the party of ladies that attended at the Castle into a series of small groups, so that they could conveniently inspect the cottages, and talk over the general course of procedure which had been adopted for bringing these families from a condition of poverty and dependence, into such a state that they loved their homes, they respected and worked zealously for their employer, and had no fear of having to look to the Union as their refuge in old age. It appeared desirable for Janet to call upon some of the wives of the tenants, and she did so as a matter of business, rather than as a mere gossiping tour. She found that the visit to the Castle had sown some good seed in the minds of the majority, for she was generally met by the inquiry—"What do you think we ought to




do?" Such a desire was always encouraged, and the first of a series of afternoons at the Abbots was easily arranged. The tenantry had kept matters with their farm labourers very much as they found them. Their warm-hearted natures had often urged them to alleviate suffering and distress, but they had only used palliatives, when they ought to have employed stronger remedies. Hence no improved conditions had been secured for the promotion of the labourers' welfare.

CHAPTER V.

Inspection of Farm Cottages—Comfort not a Matter of Wages—
How was Comfort Secured?—Did it Cost Too Much?—Honesty
to the Poor, Foundation-stone of Success—Some of the Steps
taken depend upon the Ladies for Success.

THE anticipated visit of inspection was not long delayed, and early in the afternoon of the appointed day five ladies arrived at the Abbotts Farm. With one, the reader is already acquainted—Mrs. Tom Hughes—for she kindly co-operated with Janet at the Castle gathering, and she was now invited with much the same object in view. She was one of the daughters of the late Mr. Watkins, a former tenant of the Manor House Farm. Some years previously to this time she had qualified herself by a regular course of study, for becoming a thoroughly practical and intelligent manager of domestic affairs, and she subsequently married a young farmer, who was now occupying the Forest Farm. As soon as the invited group had assembled at the Abbotts, a walk was taken to the six cottages which were on the farm. There was but one opinion as to their condition, and as to the happiness and comfort of the occupants. All were busy, but clean; the cottages were in very neat order, the gardens showed a strong array of growing crops, all indicated active work,



partially interrupted by the regular duties of the farm. The milk arrangements probably caused the greatest surprise, for in each house there was a good supply of milk and butter, with some to spare for sale. Annie Murch had become an institution of the place, and still continued her regular visits to Wrexborough for the sale of surplus products.

"I wish you would tell me," said Mrs. Ellis, of Birchwood Farm, to Margaret Hutton, "how it is you manage to keep such a nice comfortable cottage with everything so plentiful. What does your husband receive!"

"It's not a matter of wages, ma'am, at all," said she, "for Thomas Hutton receives neither more nor less than they be paying on the farms about. And for the matter o' that, he used to have the same wages when we lived down in Leaside as we do now, but we was always going wrong there. We got the fever once, and Thomas Hutton used to go to the Cross Keys and spend more than he ought, and we was terrible miserable."

"I can understand all that," said Mrs. Ellis, "but I cannot understand how all is so different here."

"Well, there now, ma'am, I'm not much better myself," said Margaret Hutton. "I sometimes dream of those wretched times, and fancy I am living through them again, and Tom coming home drunk, and quarrelling enough to drive me mad, and I wake all of a tremble like. B'lieve me, ma'am, I'd rather walk to my grave, than go back to live as we did at Leaside."

"You must find this a little heaven on earth, after all you have gone through," said Mrs. Ellis.

"I leave it to the l'arned to say what heaven be like,"

said Margaret Hutton, "but we be very busy and very, very happy, and this be the happiest spot I've come across yet."

"Does your husband ever get drunk now?" asked Mrs. Morgan, of Holmewood Farm.

"He was bad enough, goodness knows," said Margaret Hutton, "but he beant so wicked as to get drunk now. You see, ma'am, he only drank when he was miserable, and it made him happy for a bit. But what was he good for next day? I don't mind saying now he could scarce hold up his head to take his wages, after what our young missus said to us women once. She said: 'No one need be ashamed to look the master in the face when he took well-earned money, but if a man feels he is receiving pay for time he has wasted, it is quite right for him to have some feeling of shame in taking money for work he has not done.' I told Tom of it, and d'ye know, he told me many and many a time, he tried hard to hold up his head, but 'twas much as ever he could do it."

"Then you and the children are happier and better up here than when you were at Leaside, and I suppose your husband is better also," said Mrs. Morgan.

"That's true," she replied. "Tom is a deal better workman than he was, he lives as a workman should live, but we did live worse than many a dog, and we weren't much better in our feelings. But, there, I do try to forget it; and I hope the children will forget it, so we'll say no more about that, please, ma'am."

"Well, tell me how it was all altered," said Mrs. Ellis.

"It was in this wise," she replied. "When Thomas Murch went to live at the Meadow Cottages, my man

asked the master to let him come here, and I do know he a'most prayed the master to give him the chance o' coming here, and of having the cottage, and the cow. I tell'ee this, he cried like a child when he told me we was to come. And I know the master do find him a good workman, and so he ought to be for the matter o' that. We could do anything for our missus or for the master; 'tis they we have to thank."

But whilst this was going on in one cottage, a somewhat similar conversation was going on in that adjoining. The ladies looked through the gardens, and saw the pigs, and the bees, but the two women had then to leave them, for the milking-time had come, so the ladies quietly wended their way to the Abbots. A "kettle-drum" was awaiting them, and they were nothing loath to exchange their views on the subject.

"I hope you were all pleased with our cottages," said Janet; "my husband and I are satisfied with the results thus far, but something may strike you as being a further improvement."


"I can speak for myself, Mrs. Holmes," said Mrs. Ellis, "that I think the results very good, but my husband is sure to ask me what it cost you, for almost every hobby is an expensive luxury, and it may be that we could not manage it."

"Where there is a will there is a way," said Janet, "and I think that will hold good on this estate so far as refers to the labourers. I am sure it has not cost my husband one penny; on the other hand, he is daily finding it a source of profit, and for this simple reason. He has a thoroughly good set of workmen who do their best for him, not merely for their wages, but because they

are as happy as the day is long, and they see that they owe their happiness to him. There is nothing special to this farm: if you or any of your neighbours wish to do the same there is nothing to prevent it, and any hint I can give shall be at your service. The first step in any improvement should be to give up all idea of doing the work for the sake of the labourers. We must be perfectly honest, and commence work with a determination to make the changes for our own sakes. None are more sensitive than the poor for being made an excuse for some other object. We want good labourers for our own advantage, and it is better to acknowledge that we are working in our own interests, than to raise the false plea of a charitable motive, which will, in all probability, become transparent, and make the would-be benefactor somewhat ridiculous."

"I do not see where we are to commence the work, Mrs. Holmes," said Mrs. Winstanley. "I should be very glad to help our workmen, for they are a miserable, worthless lot as you can find in the country, and my husband is always crying out against them. He says they are going from bad to worse, and that the men are really the masters now."

"I mentioned just now what I thought to be the first step," said Janet. "We must not pretend to be doing it except for our own benefit. The second step is a determination to set aside all idea of 'charity.' A poor person may be absolutely compelled to seek for a gift, but such circumstances degrade the mind. If on the other hand you are willing to help the poor to help themselves, and at their own costs, you make them respect themselves, and they will respect you in consequence. You will scarcely credit me in saying that I avoid all



so-called charitable gifts to the labourers, and I have done so from the commencement. I even refused to give them milk, although they wanted it badly, but my husband helped them (on proper payment) and they have no want of milk now, nor of anything else."

"I am sure we shall all admit that such is the case," said Mrs. Ellis, "but you must be good enough to show us some of the other steps in the plan."

"The next step is to prepare the women for taking care of a good home, and for knowing how to make good use of the milk; in fact, how to prepare good food generally," said Janet. "If the middle class were equally ignorant and equally wasteful, we should soon see similar confusion and misery in our homes as we do in theirs. We should see the husbands driven to the hotels and clubs for comfort and amusement, instead of finding it round their own firesides. We must have the women better educated."

"I am quite sure my husband will be against any more education," said Mrs. Jones, "for he was only saying to me yesterday, that there was too much education already by one half."

"May not your husband have referred to there being too much imperfect education?" asked Mrs. Tom Hughes. "Do you think he would object to a labourer's wife being able to prepare a cheap, enjoyable, and nourishing dinner for her husband? Do you not think that a man could work better on good food, than upon that which is of a poor and badly cooked character? Would not the master gain by it quite as much as the labourer?"

"I agree to every word of that," said Mrs. Jones; "but I call all of that useful teaching, and this must do good."

"It is such useful teaching as this, that we must give to the women of the class of which we are speaking," said Janet. "I fear we shall not be able to go into full particulars to-day as to what should be done in each and every case. I had for three winters a regular working afternoon every week, when the women used to come here and bring their work. They lost no time, and yet they learnt something each meeting. I also gave the women instruction in dairy work, but they rendered me assistance there in return. Each of you ladies could do the same with the women upon your husbands' farms, and this will be the third step in the course of procedure which I think should be adopted for the benefit of the labourers. You will see that I was most careful not to put the women under any obligation to me. I think this is very important, for you will succeed best by letting them feel that you are really doing all, so that they may make the labourer's home more happy and comfortable, because you want them to make their husbands better workmen. If your secret wish is to make them grateful to you for your assistance, you will certainly fail in your object; but if you honestly work for the true result you are seeking to secure, a thoroughly genuine gratitude will manifest itself. I have found this to be so, but my mother, who speaks from a very lengthened experience, has long held this view."

"And what is the next step, Mrs. Holmes?" asked Mrs. Ellis.

"You must then secure convenient and suitable cottages and garden ground," said Janet; "and if the labourers can have a good supply of milk at a fair and reasonable cost, you will have surmounted most of the

steps which are necessary for you to take. These matters, however, we must leave for our husbands to work out as simple business details, so that they may be considered as entirely outside our province. I hope you have seen to-day, that we have brought our labourers from a wretched condition to one of considerable comfort. They have paid for their privileges, step by step, and they are under no obligation to us. We have made them respect themselves, and they have kindly feelings towards us; but it has secured for us a set of good and cheerful labourers. If you ask me why they are good and cheerful labourers, I say that although they have to work hard they have good food to support them, they live in comfort, they have saved money, and each man has insured his life, so that they do not look to the Union as their final house of rest, nor to the Relieving Officer as their future Minister of Finance. They have, in fact, some good things to enjoy, their minds are peaceful and happy in their homes, their daily work has ceased to be that wearisome toil which it once was, and they can find some pleasure in life."

CHAPTER VI.

A Good Example better than Precept—Good Cottages needed—Who is to Pay for Them?—A Housekeeper ignorant of House-keeping—A Remedy found—A Meeting and a Separation of Friends—Progress with the “Homes on the Crescent”—A New Director.

THE visit for the inspection of the labourers' cottages, to which reference has been made, was only one of a series. The attention of the wives of the tenantry of the estate had been fairly aroused to the question, and it was freely discussed on every farm. The subject was entered upon with the more energy, because the evil with which it grappled was so very general. Every farmer knew what it was to have slow, feeble, and incompetent labourers, and yet at the Abbotts Farm it was clear that the difficulty had been overcome. It was not a question of what was hoped for; it was an accomplished fact, one which, during four years, had been quietly advancing to maturity, and now stood forth an acknowledged success. The question was often asked—If this has been possible upon one farm, why not upon others? and very various answers were given. Still one fact stood out with tolerable clearness—that it was quite possible to make labourers happy in their homes, and faithful to their employers.


The example of the Abbots Farm was to be forthwith copied upon at least four of the farms upon the estate, and upon each of these the weekly meetings for the wives of the labourers were to commence soon after the harvest was finished. It was also evident that the question of farm cottages was one which demanded early consideration. In speaking with the Squire upon the subject, Mr. Holmes drew attention to the fact that it was likely to cause an increased outlay upon the estate, which would have to be specially provided for.

"You will no doubt remember the fair statement you put before me," said the Squire, "when you required cottages for the Abbots Farm. My opinion has not changed, and I suppose yours remains as it was? If so, adopt the same principle where you consider it desirable. If I can secure 4 per cent. upon an outlay which carries so many indirect advantages to the estate I shall feel perfectly satisfied. I have a good deal of money which is paying very little over $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and it may as well be better employed."

"My impression is that the arrangement I proposed in reference to the cottages has only been strengthened by more recent observations," said Mr. Holmes, "and I think it is fair to all parties."

"Then you think we may congratulate the ladies upon their successful diplomacy?" inquired the Squire.


"I believe that a work has been commenced upon this estate, which I venture to think will continue until you have throughout your property a contented and happy body of labourers," said Mr. Holmes. "This, I hope, will re-act upon the tenants and improve their prospects. I am quite sure the congratulations are well deserved, but



we must remember that the work has yet to be established. It has been fairly commenced, and with every prospect of a satisfactory success."

"I am truly thankful to be able to entertain the same expectation," said the Squire.

It thus became Mr. Holmes' duty to advance the work upon the estate with prudence and discretion. The new tenant of the Manor House Farm was exceedingly anxious to make effective alterations respecting the labourers working for him. Charlie Webster had been so fully engaged during the time he had held that farm, in looking after drainage and other improvements, that he had been unable to do anything for the labourers. But Charlie had no wife to attend to these matters, and his housekeeper, Mary Dunbar, with all her good qualities, would not have been acceptable to the wives of the labourers, who hold somewhat rigid views on these delicate matters. George Newbold was in a slightly better position, for although he was a bachelor, he had a sister who had come to reside with him, and she was very anxious to follow Janet's lead. In the few interviews which had taken place between Gertrude Newbold and Janet, they had been mutually pleased with each other, so much so indeed, that Janet anticipated in her, an agreeable, if not a very competent helper. There was more enthusiasm than understanding; she was zealous, but she had very little knowledge of domestic matters. There was one redeeming feature, which gave promise of better things—she knew her weakness, and she was determined to correct it. Acting upon Janet's suggestion, they drove over to Wyndham College, and called upon Miss Temple, the Lady Principal, to consult with her upon the best course to be taken. Ger-



trude Newbold was in an exceedingly awkward position, for she had come to the Manor House Farm to keep house for her brother, but she was quite ignorant of the ordinary requirements for such a position. The Lady Principal suggested that one of the young ladies who had taken the College Diploma, and was then on the point of completing her course of study in "The Homes on the Crescent," would be in every way suitable as a tutor and companion for Gertrude Newbold, and considered that under such guidance she would be able to make good progress. It was subsequently arranged that the Lady Principal and Marian Trevor should drive over and spend an afternoon at the Manor House Farm. The ultimate issue of this visit was an arrangement for her to come to the Manor House Farm in the course of a few weeks and reside with Gertrude Newbold for at least three months.

The house intended as the official residence of the Agent was now completed, and was well suited for its purposes. It was very commodious and comfortable, without being too large, and it reflected credit both upon the architect and builder. In close conjunction with the residence were the estate offices, and these were fitted with every convenience for the work to be done. Before leaving the Abbots Farm, Mr. Holmes naturally wished to meet his men and their wives at a supper, and arrangements had been made accordingly. These arrangements closely corresponded with those made for the first Harvest Home supper, at which Mr. Holmes and his bride were present. After plain and substantial refreshments, he addressed them as follows :—

"My friends and helpers, five years have nearly passed since we first met in this room, and I have now asked

you to meet my wife and myself just before we leave the Abbotts Farm. My direct connection with you as your employer will shortly cease, but I hope we shall still remain friends, helpers, and good neighbours. During the time we have worked together on the Abbotts Farm, it has been a satisfaction to find that you have steadily improved in health, strength, and happiness. You have therefore been able to do me better work, than when you were weak in body and discouraged in mind. I am very glad to see you enjoying greater comforts, and you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have secured them at your own cost, so that you deserve to enjoy them. I leave you in the care of my brother-in-law, Mr. Charles Webster, feeling satisfied that you will do your duty towards each other fairly and honourably. Farewell!"

Cheers were given most heartily for the Master, and then for the Mistress, after which Janet said :—

"I thank you for your good wishes, but I am glad to say it is not necessary for me to change my relations with you, for, as my brother will now hold the Abbotts Farm, I shall not forget the friends I see around me, but I shall be permitted to come and see you very much as usual, and I shall now follow my husband's example in hoping that we may still remain friends, helpers, and good neighbours."

The change in residence was shortly accomplished with the usual inconveniences, and Mr. and Mrs. Holmes were at length duly noted as being in residence at the Holt Cottage. The Abbotts having been vacated, Charlie Webster was soon settled in, under the care of his attentive housekeeper. The house was well and comfortably furnished, and the V.C. picture—an heirloom of the family—now hung over the sideboard in his dining-room. It

was a constant memento to him of his father's noble conduct, and an example for his imitation in his own path in life.

As soon as the change of residence had been completed, it was arranged for Mrs. Webster to come down from Scotland, and visit them with Professor and Mrs. Nicholson. Janet received her mother, whilst Charlie Webster welcomed his sister and her husband. The question of the money loss had always been passed over as lightly as possible, for all considered that the old lady had acted in the manner she conceived to be for the best interests of all. It had unfortunately proved to have been done in error, but her children desired to let her feel that the loss had not been of such a character, as to interfere in any way with their comfort. Their homes would claim much of her time during the year, and an agreed annual allowance having been privately arranged between her three children, this sum was placed at her absolute disposal. There was, therefore, a special reason for her present visit, for Janet and her husband both desired to receive her personal congratulations on entering her new home. The family gathering was looked forward to as a source of mutual satisfaction, and it was completed by Mr. Holmes's father and mother coming over from the Holt Farm. In this way the family group became the first to gather within Janet's new home. The imagination can picture to itself the happy family group, and it is not necessary or desirable for us to intrude further upon them at the present moment.

Some further extensions had been made to the "Homes on the Crescent," by the building of the Jessamine and Laburnum Homes. An early visit to these had been

arranged, more especially as Mr. Holmes and Charlie Webster were two of the trustees, and they had to attend officially. The occasion was rather important, for the Lady Superintendent was anxious to be relieved of duty, as she was going to London. Letters had also been received from Miss Clara Watkins, informing the trustees of her return from the United States, whither she had gone after completing her studies in England. The appointment of a new Lady Superintendent had to be made, and she was unanimously elected to the position.

The "Homes on the Crescent" had now been used for more than four years for the reception of persons suffering from illness or accidents, and who wished to secure proper nursing arrangements away from their own residences. It was entirely reserved for "paying patients," but there was a variation in the charges to meet the requirements of different classes of society. Every patient had a separate room, with every necessary comfort, and trained nurses were engaged to take care of the patients under the supervision of the Lady Superintendent. The patients were perfectly free to choose his or her own medical attendant, and the orders given were most scrupulously attended to. In an institution of this kind the various appliances required for the sick-room were provided, and many conveniences and comforts were here at command, which would be wanting even in the establishments of the wealthy.

The "Homes" were situated on land by the side of the Wrexborough road, just opposite to Wyndham College, and very near to the town. The buildings were arranged in the form of a crescent, whilst a beautiful lawn dotted over with flower-beds lay between them

and the turnpike road. The central building, which was much larger than the others, had accommodation for the residence of the Lady Superintendent and ten young ladies as pupils. There were excellent cooking arrangements, surgical stores, and appliances of various kinds, in addition to accommodation for four patients. On the right and left of this building there were two cottages known as the Rose, Woodbine, Jessamine, and Laburnum Homes respectively, and these were all fitted up for the reception of patients. An underground passage connected all with the central building, rendering the communication between them easy and rapid. All over-crowding of the patients was avoided, and the advantage of a well-regulated hospital were added to the comforts of home. Such was the institution, to the control of which Miss Clara Watkins was appointed. It had proved itself to be a priceless blessing to many a sufferer, giving help which could be accepted even by persons of wealth without sacrifice of dignity. The "Homes on the Crescent" were favourites alike with medical men and with patients for many miles around Wrexborough, for in many a case recovery had been hastened, and many a home had been preserved from that utter confusion which too often reigns supreme during times of illness.

CHAPTER VII.

Losses in Corn Crops—Ships carrying Too Much Sail—Quality or Cash—Speed or Safety—Landlord's Land causes Damage to a Tenant—If possible turn an Enemy into a Friend—Food for Labourers something like Fuel to the Steam Engine—Joint Contributors to a Joint Interest.

THE Agent of a large property, who is anxious to promote the welfare of the tenantry established upon it, is continually brought into consultation respecting the difficulties which have to be overcome. The Holt Castle estate was no exception in this respect. As Mr. Holmes' experience in growing seed corn was well known, his counsel and advice were now much sought after. If there was one complaint then more general than another, it was the small yield of wheat and its inferior character, and one of the largest tenants on the estate—Mr. George Morgan, of Holmewood—was a great loser in consequence.

"I would really like to know, Mr. Holmes," said he,—at one of their interviews, "how you account for my sad losses in the wheat crop. I know that the season has been less favourable than usual, but that does not satisfy my mind."

"I think," said Mr. Holmes, "we have very generally been too much disposed to encourage the growth of wheat

to such an excess, that we have got it into too tender a condition to stand against an unfavourable season. We all know that if a general preference should be given any one season to the growth of a very delicate wheat—say Talavera—if the weather proved to be unusually good, a very excellent quality of corn would be produced in many cases ; but if the season were to be very trying and severe, the crop would be a general failure. Hence we are all agreed that it is desirable to vary the seed used, according to the climate of the district in which it is grown. The great majority of farmers—and you amongst the number—have, I think, sown seed requiring a better climate than they have had to contend with this last season or two, and the crops have suffered accordingly. I have purposely avoided growing very fine quality wheat, and by the use of a strong and hardy wheat, I have succeeded on the Abbots Farm in having a crop quite able to contend with the trials to which the crop was exposed.”

“That is all very well,” said Mr. Morgan, “but we must maintain the quality of our wheat, especially now prices are so much against us.”

“Excuse me,” said Mr. Holmes, “if I have to differ from you. I really think we ought to endeavour to secure that wheat which will give the largest money produce per acre. In one of our bad seasons for wheat, acting on this rule, instead of going in for quality, I did my very best to obtain a large quantity of corn, hoping by a large yield to secure more money than by a smaller produce of higher value per bushel to the miller. The result of this course of procedure was that from one good and hardy sort I secured 40 bushels per acre, weighing 64 pounds per bushel ; whilst another equally sound, but a more productive

variety, yielded 60 bushels per acre, weighing 63 pounds. You know that in the season I refer to, the quality of my wheat was after all above that obtained when high quality was made the chief object."

"I recollect the case perfectly well," said Mr. Morgan, "and it has always been a complete puzzle to me."

"I do not think it need be," said Mr. Holmes, "and if you will allow me, I will use a simile I have employed before. You used to be fond of boating, I know. Now suppose you had to cruise in a yacht for a certain distance, with this condition imposed upon you. You may set your sails as you like before you start, but you must not alter them afterwards. You would naturally have to choose between speed and safety, and you would no doubt endeavour to set as much sail as was consistent with safety. If you were too careful you would proceed very slowly; if your sails had been too full and a sudden squall came on, then you would be upset. Like the Eurydice, sailing in her full glory one moment in the gentle breeze, and in another instant a tremendous gale came upon her and she was lost."

"I would be very sorry to sail a yacht," said Mr. Morgan, "unless I could trim her sails at will. But what has that to do with wheat?"

"The farmer when he has selected his seed wheat, cannot alter his choice after it is sown," said Mr. Holmes. "There it is 'for better, for worse.' If he sows a wheat which is so delicate that the season is too severe for it, he is like the boatmen who have ventured too much sail, for the result is a failure. If he has sown a more hardy wheat, it would be able to stand the severities of the season, like the boat carrying moderate sail. Farmers

have too generally been disposed to hoist too much sail, and they have suffered in consequence."

"But however are we to know what sort of a season to provide for?" asked Mr. Morgan.

"Decide as you would if you were going out in the yacht on the conditions I named," said Mr. Holmes; "go in for safety rather than speed. It is the same with seed wheat. Have a seed sufficiently hardy to meet the worst season you are likely to have."

"Then we shall lose quality," said Mr. Morgan.

"You may do so, but that is not by any means certain," said Mr. Holmes. "You may, if you like, say the choice is between safety and quality. I prefer going in for the former, for I am sure the season will help me so far as regards the latter."

"Well, Mr. Holmes, we must do something," said Mr. Morgan, "or we shan't please you when rent day comes round."

"Let 'safety' be your motto, Mr. Morgan," said Mr. Holmes, "and you will weather the storm. However, I must hasten off to the Birchwood Farm, for I have arranged to look into a difficulty there about the water coming from the Capstone Bog."

On meeting Mr. Ellis and his son William (who, it may be remarked, had held the Squire's scholarship in Rodney College with much credit) they went to inspect the Capstone Bog. It extended over about 25 acres, and was situated on the top of the hill which rises behind Birchwood Farm. It was beyond dispute that this bog was causing some serious loss to the tenant of this farm, and, as the bog was waste land remaining in the landlord's possession, it was equally clear that

the damage was being committed by the owner. It is true it was an old-standing grievance, but Mr. Ellis thought it only fair to have it rectified. After a careful inspection had been made, Mr. Holmes inquired of Mr. Ellis what he wanted to have done.

"I only want to be left without injury," said Mr. Ellis. "Keep the water out of my way, and I shall be content."

"We can do that, Mr. Ellis, and possibly something more than this can be done for you," said Mr. Holmes. "I do not know whether it occurs to you, William Ellis, but you have here a very similar state of things to that they used to describe to us in Rodney College as existing on a property in Staffordshire. You must recollect the description. I remember it the more clearly, perhaps, because I went over the property and saw the whole affair in work. On that estate there was a large bog just like this, and it was causing great loss and damage. The bog was drained; the water carried down the hill, just as it could be done here, and 12-horse water power was secured in the farm buildings. They utilised it for threshing, crushing and grinding corn, chaff cutting, sawing timber, and for doing various other useful work. Not content with this, they irrigated 120 acres or so of meadow land, after the water had done its other work."

"I recollect it now," said William Ellis, "for it was such a surprise for some years that drainage water should be useful for irrigation."

"But that was turning an enemy into a friend," said Mr. Ellis. "I wish you would do that here for us, for there is a water-wheel down at the old mill-house, but

I am doubtful of the entire lot, for it has not been worked for many a long day."

They all inspected the premises and the water-wheel, but they were of one opinion, that both buildings and water-wheel had had their day, and that if the water power were to be utilised it must be under some better arrangement.

"Well then, Mr. Ellis, I will take care that the water shall do you very little more damage," said Mr. Holmes, "for it will pay us to drain the Capstone Bog whether we use the water or not. When we know better what water we get from it, we shall be able to judge more correctly as to what should be done in the way of using it."

"We shall have to do something here, Mr. Holmes, about cottages for the men," said Mr. Ellis. "My son and I walked over to the Abbotts Farm a few days since, for my wife would give me no peace until we had done so. Any way, she is anxious to do something for our workpeople, and from all we could see of the farm labourers, it looks as if it would pay us to do the same. I suppose your men were only about the average when you took the place from old Mr. Foster?"

"They were a very shady lot, I can tell you," said Mr. Holmes, "and I am almost ready to say they were below the average. They are good men now, and work thoroughly well. To a very great extent the activity and power of these men is determined by their food. If they have a short supply of nourishment, we can only have a corresponding quantity of work. We see the same result arising in the corn we give to our horses, and the coal we give to our engines; the work done must

correspond with the food and fuel supplied. We often hear persons complaining of the feebleness of the men, but the men cannot do impossibilities. I found the plan of keeping a cow for each cottage, and charging five shillings a week for the hire, a great help to them; it paid me, and it paid them thoroughly well. That, of course, depends upon the women knowing how to make good use of the milk."

"I must say I do admire your wife, for what she did in teaching her people," said Mr. Ellis. "If she had been born and brought up on a farm, she would perhaps have been above teaching the women, but she did not look at it that way. She has set us all a good example, and I would like to follow out just the same plan here, for my wife is ready to do her part."

"So far as regards the Cottages," said Mr. Holmes, "we are now arranging for some for the Forest Farm, on the same terms as I paid the Squire on my own account; and I will follow with yours if you like."

"What are the terms you refer to?" inquired Mr. Ellis.

"I calculated that a pair of good cottages could be built for £300, and the interest on that sum at 6 per cent. comes to £18 a year for two cottages. I considered that the landlord, the tenant, and the labourer gain by the improved cottage accommodation. The landlord is distinctly interested in the well-being of those living upon his estate, and I put him down for one share. The tenant gains by having men on his farm, instead of their being exhausted before they commence work, and in fact he gains by their general happiness and comfort. I therefore put the tenant down for one share also. I

charge the other share to the labourer, for he must find himself a home. I charge the cottager £3 a year for his house, and I add one acre of land, charging £2 a year for it. Thus, for £5 a year, the labourer has his cottage and garden."

"I will think it over, Mr. Holmes," said Mr. Ellis, "and let you know in a few days ; but I rather like your idea of going beyond mere talk of the joint-interests of landlord, tenant, and labourer, by making all of us joint-contributors for the promotion of the work."

CHAPTER VIII.

Rodney College Flourishing—A Well-deserved Compliment—
Neglect of the Poor produces its Own Scourge—A Neighbour
Under a Cloud—Should Farmers Hunt?—The Gathering of the
Rodney Club—The Value of a Competent Principal in Rodney
College—Genuine Co-operation of the College with Farmers.

THE presence of Professor Nicholson in the neighbourhood was tolerably certain to secure an early call from Dr. Whichcord, of Wrexborough, who ranked as one of the family rather than simply as a friend. There were so many pleasing associations in which both of them had co-operated with Mr. Holmes and Charlie Webster, that any re-union was always welcomed with general satisfaction. In fact, the Doctor was a favourite in the family, and deservedly so.

“How are matters progressing at Rodney Hall?” inquired Dr. Whichcord. “We are going to send you two of our young men this year, and their promise is good, for they have stood well in our local Science Classes.”

“The Hall is full in addition to the College,” said Professor Nicholson. “We command the confidence of our students, they work well, and we find them make good progress. We are never fearful of any inquiry being made of our men, and wherever they go they recommend

their College and Hall ; thus by our fruits we are judged rather than by our professions, and in proof of this our warmest friends are those who have been under our care."

"We are making satisfactory progress here also," said the Doctor, "for Wyndham College is turning out some thoroughly well-educated girls. We always take care that the instruction they receive, has a direct influence upon the duties or the happiness of the home. It is surprising to observe the influence which is thus being exercised over a large surrounding district. There was a class of society—I may say, the upper middle class—in which, as you know, a preparation for the duties of life was openly repudiated. Wyndham College has now been in work between four and five years, and it has told its tale. But nothing surprises me more than the progress of the labourers on the Abbotts Farm, thanks to their friend—and our friend—Mrs. John Holmes. It is quite the prominent subject of conversation in the neighbourhood. I must commend you, Mrs. John, for your recent politic course of procedure. One would have imagined that you had acted with the skill of a military commander. You took care that your labourers should become well seasoned in their prosperity, and then you revealed the completed work under such pleasing courtesies at the Castle, that the good ladies who were invited are completely charmed."

"I am much obliged to you, Dr. Whichcord, for your compliment," said Janet ; "but putting aside this part of your comment, may I gather from your remark that attention has been largely drawn to the condition of the labourers on the farms of this neighbourhood?"

"On that point I have no doubt whatever," said Dr.

Whichcord, "and an untold benefit will arise. We can scarcely realise how great the indirect advantages really are. The more we learn even of the nature of disease, the more we see that a neglect of the poor reverts upon ourselves in a way we little expect. I do not mean from a money point of view, but in the more or less malignant forms which a disease assumes. That reminds me, Mr. Holmes, that you will have to attack the deficiencies of Leaside. Much of the property belongs to the Squire, and will necessarily claim your early attention."

"We have had some talk over the matter," said Mr. Holmes, "and I hope to secure some property there for the Squire, which at present interferes with a proper execution of my plan. Ultimately it may be made a very healthy and pretty village."

"You were referring just now to a very important matter, Doctor, respecting the reversion of trouble we bring upon ourselves by neglecting the lower classes," said Professor Nicholson. "It is evidently to our interest to raise their habits of life, especially if we desire to protect the health of our own families. I now put it upon the lower standard of self-interest, not to speak of any higher motives."

"The fact is becoming more and more clearly established," said the Doctor, "that if we neglect the lower classes, and allow them to fall into a dirty, miserable, half-famished condition, they become a hot-bed for malignant diseases, giving the germs of disease—which might otherwise float harmlessly by—an activity of form and a virulence of character which is simply fearful to contemplate. They thus prepare the scourge which is to punish us for neglecting them. You have set us a capital example

here. It has become a decided success, and will therefore extend. . . . I hear that the new Lady Superintendent comes to the 'Homes' to-morrow."

"Yes, I am going to drive round for her, and take her in," said Janet. "She is now at the Forest Farm with her sister."

"You have reduced those wild spirits into very valuable members of society," said the Doctor. "Mrs. Tom Hughes is now a very sensibly-minded woman, and I should think she is an excellent wife. If her sister Clara has improved in a similar manner, she will be most valuable to us at the 'Homes.' When do you lose your mother and sister, Mrs. Holmes?"

"My sister and her little girl return to Rodney Hall in a few days," said Janet. "Professor Nicholson has to be in residence before the college session commences on the 1st of October. My mother will spend the winter with us, I hope, for I shall value her counsel and help, as well as the pleasure of her company. You know our neighbour, Mr. Newbold, of the Manor House Farm, I suppose."

"Only by sight, not personally," said the Doctor.

"I cannot understand his exclusive manner," said Janet. "His sister is bright enough, and she has really many good points of character; but she appears equally astonished at his manner. I learn from her, that she has really come with him chiefly for companionship, for his parents, who are wealthy, are very anxious about this depression, and thought farming, with some hunting, would rouse him up a little."

"Has this been his habit through life?" asked the Doctor.

"Not for more than four or five years, I believe," said

Janet. "His sister tells me he is a most good-natured brother, but this lowness of spirits followed an illness which he had some years since. He does not appear to be under medical treatment. We have asked him up here, but he declined, with thanks, and his sister came alone. Do you know my brother has two pupils coming to reside with him at the Abbots? I hear that they are both hunting men."

"That is, in my opinion, one of the mistakes which farmers make," said the Doctor, "for it only leads them to neglect business."

"I join issue with you there, Doctor," said Charlie Webster, "and, in fact, I am bound to do so, for I fully intend to keep a good hunter this season myself. I tell you, Doctor, why I am going to do so; primarily because I love the sport, and also because I shall, with anything like good luck, make it a source of profit. I shall not neglect business, but I shall throw some little additional pleasure into my work, and make my life all the happier for it. I believe that one great cause of success in life is making one's life worth living, for you can then work with spirit and energy. I believe this influence of a happy mind applies to ourselves as well as to our labourers. When they are happy they work with spirit, and they respect their employers because they give them the opportunity of being happy. That is my view of the case, and I think it applies to all classes of society. The utterly miserable man is a dangerous man, but make his lot in life happy, and just as you make him a happy man, so do you bind him to his position in life, and you secure his respect, because you contribute to his happiness."

"We will renew our conversation on this subject

another day," said the Doctor. "I hope your expectations may be fully realised, but I must soon say good-bye. To you, my friend Nicholson, and to your good wife, I can only say you carry with you to the far North my best wishes for your health and happiness, and may your little Lulu be distinguished in after life by all the good qualities of her parents."

Within a few days of this friendly gathering it became Mr. Holmes' duty to be present at the commencement of the work in the Science Classes at Wrexborough. It was in attending these classes that he had himself taken those early steps which ultimately led him to his present position of influence and responsibility. The work of these Science Classes was well and efficiently discharged, and the numbers in attendance, instead of decreasing as the work was advanced, showed a steady and progressive rise in each succeeding year. The two Government Scholarships which were competed for each year—one for young men, and one for young women—gave a powerful stimulus for a vigorous competition, in which although only two could be successful all would derive advantage. In the previous examination, the £50 Scholarship offered by the County Agricultural Society, had been won by a student attending the Wrexborough Science Class, thus enabling two scholars to be sent to Rodney College.

On the following day the meeting of the Rodney Club took place, when the past students of Rodney College in the neighbourhood, gathered to wish success to the scholars going into Scotland for collegiate instruction. On the present occasion two sons of tenant farmers were about to enter upon their scholarships, and many useful

hints and suggestions did they receive from those who had taken the same course in earlier years. It was a great satisfaction to all interested in Rodney College, that past students had no hesitation in recommending it as a good school of learning, in which competent teachers laboured with full confidence in their principal, their colleagues, and their students. Dr. Thomson had held the chief office for many years past, he knew the road the students had to travel over, and he could therefore guide them with a full knowledge of the destination at which they desired to arrive. He surrounded himself with thoroughly competent colleagues, and prudently took counsel with them on the general course of procedure. His primary object was to secure excellences in those who were educated under his care, and all who could contribute towards the promotion of this object, were warmly encouraged in their work.

A system of cordial co-operation had now been established for some years past, between Rodney College and the farmers in the surrounding districts. The College had really become the centre to which all made reference in any case of difficulty ; and such applications had become the more frequent because the members of the staff were generally experienced and competent men. Charlie Robinson had been engaged as an assistant in Professor Nicholson's research laboratory for rather more than two years, and had become one of the most successful tutors in the College. He had never forgotten a reproof he once received on the Holt Farm, and it had been the means of leading him to adopt the rule of expressing himself in an intelligible manner, according to the knowledge of the person addressed.

The experimental growth of crops had been productive of most important results, for not only were the skill and experience of farmers brought into demand, but the results obtained were tested by skilled experts who knew what to look for as evidence of success. Rodney College held no monopoly of good service in the promotion of Agriculture, but it could at least claim the honour of successfully performing its legitimate duties.

CHAPTER IX.

The Lawn-meet at Holt Castle—The Tenants Turn Out Well—The Chase—Too Intimate Acquaintance with the Soil—A Refuge for the Unfortunate—A Surveying Party—Estate Workshops—Cheap Labour—What is in a Name?

ACTING upon his expressed determination to keep a good hunter, Charlie Webster had gone North with Professor Nicholson and his sister, in order that he might secure a suitable horse. Bidding them farewell, they soon passed over the Border, but his market was in the extreme north of England. Here he was met by an expert on whose professional skill he could place the greatest confidence, and the result was he purchased a young hunter of great promise—a dark bay horse, with black points, and four years old—for sixty guineas, with which he returned forthwith to the Abbots Farm. Before many days had elapsed, Charlie Webster determined to try him with the hounds, and his two pupils—Atherley and Burch—were equally anxious to see something of the country. His expectations were more than realised, for his horse gave every indication of becoming a very perfect hunter. At the close of a capital day's hunting they returned home, anxiously anticipating another good day's work. The lawn-meet of the hounds at Holt Castle was always a

tolerably brilliant affair, but it was to be more especially so this year, as the Squire intended his son, who had just returned from Rugby, to make his first appearance with the hounds.

The Tenants, who were in the habit of turning out for a day now and then, had naturally determined to make this day one of that number. The Abbots and the Manor House Farms made a strong contribution, for as Charlie Webster and his two pupils were riding quietly to the meet, they were followed in the distance by George Newbold and his sister. With a view of allowing the latter to overtake their party, they proceeded as slowly as possible, but their followers evidently desired to avoid gaining upon them. Charlie Webster shortly left his companions, and turning round, met the Newbolds and accompanied them up to the meet. It was evident to him that George Newbold had yielded a very unwilling consent to turn out, and was more than usually reserved and self-occupied. His sister was particularly bright and entertaining, doing her best to impart some cheerfulness to her brother, but with very disappointing results.

At length the formalities of the meet were over, and the hounds threw off in the covers by Holmewood Farm, starting with little loss of time a strong fox, which gave the field their full work to hold their own in the chase. After a tolerably direct run for half an hour, and taking them well to the south of Wrexborough, the fox rounded off and took across Mr. Humphrey's farm at the Grange. Gertrude Newbold was riding well to the front, for she was well able to take care of herself. Charlie Webster was taking it easy with his young hunter, paying especial regard to his more perfect training. George Newbold,

who was not far off, was following in the chase in a somewhat mechanical manner, his thoughts evidently wandering from the matter in hand. As they came near Mr. Humphrey's barn, Newbold's horse made a false step in clearing a fence, and both rider and horse came to the ground with great force. Help was speedily rendered, but it was evident that Newbold was seriously injured. He was accordingly carried into the Grange, and a messenger was despatched for Dr. Whichcord. Whilst such relief as the house afforded was cheerfully rendered to the sufferer, it appeared desirable that Charlie Webster should inform Gertrude Newbold of the accident, and bring her back to her brother. Thus when the doctor arrived, they had both returned to the Grange, and were followed by young Burch, who had noticed that there was something wrong. An examination showed that no bones were broken, but some very serious contusions, and through Mr. Burch's assistance, Newbold was conveyed in an invalid carriage to the "Homes on the Crescent." Dr. Whichcord felt the more anxious about his patient because of his low nervous condition, and he therefore saw him placed in his bed, in the room which had been prepared awaiting his arrival. Charlie Webster and Gertrude Newbold had ridden on, to ask the Lady Superintendent to make the necessary arrangements; but as soon as this had been done, Charlie Webster had at once to take charge of her horse, for the excitement which had held her up was expended, and she was removed to the private room of the Lady Superintendent, where she remained for two or three hours. In the mean time George Newbold was safely placed in his bed. The Doctor's orders to the nurse enjoined the most perfect quiet, and all that was

necessary was forthwith attended to, so that by the time Gertrude Newbold was ready to ride home, the report of her brother was satisfactory and encouraging.

But whilst some were seeking health and pleasure in sport, there were others upon whom the claims of duty were paramount. The accommodation provided in the new estate offices gave every facility for the proper preparation of plans of the various farms. Mr. Holmes had long felt the importance of having proper plans prepared, which would enable a record to be kept of the drainage done upon the estate. He was prepared with his own memoranda so far as regarded the Abbots Farm, but much drainage had been done on the Manor House Farm, of which no record had been kept, and to the preparation of this plan he devoted his earliest attention. He had consequently sent a surveying party to that farm, and he went in the afternoon of the day to see to their progress. Much to his surprise, Charlie Webster and Gertrude rode up whilst he was there, and informed him of the events of the day. Nothing now remained to be done, except to send a groom to the Grange for Newbold's hunter, and to secure occasional reports of the patient's progress.

It had also appeared desirable to secure for the estate convenient workshops, in which the work for the new buildings required upon the estate should be prepared. A saw-mill was greatly needed, and, having regard to the requirements for the new cottages and other permanent improvements contemplated on the estate, it appeared to be necessary to have a small brick and tile yard. Mr. Holmes had consequently determined to seek out a convenient site for their erection. The drainage of the Capstone Bog was liberating such a large flow of water

that it encouraged him in the hope, that a strong motive power would be available for estate works near a suitable bed of clay which had been discovered. The probability of being able to carry out this desirable object he wished to determine without delay, hence he rode over to inspect the work and its surroundings. Samples of clay were taken for examination, but, so far as regarded the locality, it appeared that the situation was sufficiently central, and it was easy of approach by good roads. Subsequent examinations proved that the clay was suitable for the required purposes.

Now, whilst Mr. Holmes was quite ready to take upon himself the arrangement of works coming fairly within the province of the estate agent, he very prudently called in professional advice whenever a necessity arose. He consequently decided to take the opinion of Mr. Thomas, an eminent engineer residing in Shrewsbury, before proceeding any further with the arrangement of the plans. Mr. Holmes considered that the special skill of an expert was likely to contribute towards the economical efficiency of the necessary works, and that a small additional outlay would permanently increase their value. On certain preliminary points he was well satisfied, for the water power appeared to be sufficient, and the supply of the necessary materials were also close at hand.

On the following morning Mr. Holmes drove into Wrexborough with Janet, and they called at the "Homes," hoping to learn full particulars respecting George Newbold. He was fortunate in meeting Dr. Whichcord at the "Homes," and his report was very favourable. The treatment had proved successful in securing complete rest, and dangerous symptoms had disappeared.

"You had better come in, Mr. John, and see him,"

said Dr. Whichcord, "for it will satisfy his sister far better than saying you have heard he was doing well."

Meanwhile Janet made herself comfortable in the room of the Lady Superintendent. After a few minutes' conversation Janet was left alone, as the Lady Superintendent, taking advantage of the patient being interrupted by the gentlemen talking to him, passed into his room to take her copy of the medical instructions placed at the foot of the bed. With her it was almost a mechanical duty, but in leaving the room her glance at the group was almost arrested by the fixity of the look with which the patient was watching her. On her return to her rooms she astonished Janet by informing her, that she did not believe that it was Mr. Newbold who was injured, for she felt assured that it was the George Newman she had met on several occasions in London. The Doctor and Mr. Holmes both observed the startled surprise of the patient as he watched the Lady Superintendent, and as soon as she had retired from the room, he remarked,

"I had no idea that I should see Miss Mary Clarke here. I have desired to see her again for some years past. I can no longer regret my 'smash up,' for I have had my reward in seeing her."

The Doctor looked with surprise at his patient, and simply remarked that he thought there must be some mistake, for that was not the lady's name.

"I cannot make any mistake about one for whom life were not too great a sacrifice," said Newbold.

"Where did you see this Miss Mary Clarke?" inquired Mr. Holmes.

"In London, about five years ago," said Newbold.

"Then you are George Newman," said Mr. Holmes.

"You know all then, do you not?" inquired Newbold.

"Yes, my wife and I saved her from your scheme," said Mr. Holmes.

"Judge me not hastily," said Newbold, "for believe me, your suspicion was without just cause. If you knew the misery I have suffered since she disappeared you would forgive my imprudence, but my love for her was and is intense, and it is a reward to me that she lives and is happy."

"We must not let this subject be more fully discussed until you are stronger and better," said the Doctor. "You must do all you can to keep quiet, and when you are convalescent you must win the lady's hand fairly."

"On those terms you will certainly command the sympathy of my wife and myself," said Mr. Holmes.

With a warm expression of thanks from Newbold they left his room and adjourned to meet the ladies, both of whom watched with anxiety some intimation of what had transpired in their communications with Newbold. The report was soon made, and the long-forgotten mystery received some explanation.

"Well," said the Doctor, "to ordinary mortals this has the appearance of being a curious case. I thought Newbold was pressed down by some unrevealed grief, and it is evident that it must have touched him pretty deeply. Little do you ladies know how deep your arrows penetrate sometimes. How did this happen?"

Janet briefly reminded the Doctor that, about five years previously, Clara Watkins went to London to obtain employment. Whilst there a gentleman paid her very marked attention, and was very profuse in his declarations of affection. But proposals were made which were exceedingly irregular, and in consultation with her husband

it was decided that Clara Watkins—who had assumed the name of Mary Clarke—should be suddenly retired from the scene. That gentleman, it appeared, made her acquaintance under the assumed name of George Newman, but there was now little reason to doubt that a real attachment existed, and that George Newbold had suffered very deeply in mind in consequence of his own irregularities. The whole affair had been kept strictly private to themselves, and it was desirable that it should remain so. Dr. Whichcord saw his patient for one moment before he left, but the few words he said gave untold satisfaction and encouragement to that long despondent man.

As soon as Janet returned home she proceeded to the Manor House Farm, and gave Gertrude Newbold a very encouraging report of her brother's progress. Day by day the patient gained strength, and many acts of kindly consideration emanated from an unseen friend. His sister was a frequent visitor, as he became able to receive her in his room. She noticed with pleasure that much of his usually reserved manner had disappeared, and as he became stronger, so also did he become brighter and more cheerful. In his medical attendant he also found a sound adviser and a true friend, his kindly words promoting restoration to health and strength quite as much as the remedies which were ordered. Mr. Holmes paid Newbold another visit before he was able to leave the "Homes," and informed him that his wife and he hoped, that as soon after his return to the Manor House as he felt himself strong enough to do so, he would meet Mary Clarke at their house, under her true name, and that the past should only be remembered so far as it could be a source of satisfaction and happiness.

CHAPTER X.

Useful Matter in the Wrong Place—Novices at Estate Work—A Good Apprentice—Parental Regard—Taking Good Care of Your Own—A Guardian Angel at Work—Home again.

ENGINEERING skill, which has done so much for the promotion of our national progress, has effected this noble work by economising power and material in an endless succession of details, which if they were regarded individually, would probably be considered as of little moment. The plan proposed by the Consulting Engineer who had been called in, for utilising the drainage water from the Capstone Bog, secured an abundant power for sawing, brickmaking, and similar work required for estate purposes, and it also enabled some help to be provided for the Birchwood Farm, and for other purposes. It was manifest that great advantages would be secured for the estate by the establishment of the contemplated works, but Mr. Holmes was desirous of making the property contribute in a fair and reasonable degree towards its own improvements. He consequently determined on an early occasion to go through the woodlands on the estate with the woodman, and forthwith prepare his record as to their condition. This examination ultimately proved that a considerable

quantity of timber could be cut and sold, with great advantage to that which would remain.

The father of the Squire had added considerably to the wood-land on the property, and he had prudently introduced plants to act as protectors and nurses for the trees which were intended to form the more permanent growth. These nurses had, however, been allowed to occupy the ground long after their services had been fully performed, and in this way they had not only become rivals, but very powerful rivals, of the timber they should have shielded. There appeared to be from £3,000 to £4,000 worth of timber which urgently needed removal, and in obtaining the Squire's approval for the Estate Workshops, he embodied in his proposals the sale of this timber, to provide funds for these and some other contemplated improvements. In due course these proposals were approved of, and the improvements were thus provided for without any new investment being made upon the property. The water which had been damaging the Birchwood Farm was to be removed and put to very useful purposes, whilst the overcrowding and injurious timber more than provided the funds for carrying out the improvements. In both of these cases injury to the estate arose from useful and valuable matter being in the wrong place.

The survey of the drainage and other estate improvements was steadily advanced, and in the two pupils at the Abbotts they found two volunteers desiring the experience of "active service." Only one condition was imposed upon their joining the estate survey party, namely, the work, if undertaken, was to be attended to in a business-like manner. To those who, like Atherley and Burch,

had undergone a regular course of science training in Rodney College, and had secured the College Science Certificate, the opportunity of taking part in the actual work of the farm and the estate, such opportunities were invaluable. Charlie Webster secured for his pupils not only the advantages of learning the work of his own farm, but also of watching the way in which estate work generally was carried out. Variation in the work attended to caused it to become pleasant, and when it was undertaken, it very properly commanded full attention. One day's hunting in the week was as much as either Charlie Webster or his pupils could manage, but even this was productive of brighter and clearer intellects, which were subsequently found to be more useful for business purposes.

There was another class of education proceeding at the Abbots. Five years previously Mr. Holmes had adopted the system of farm apprentices, and at the commencement of each year a new apprentice had been added to the group. The first was Bill Moore, a son of the shepherd at the Holt Farm, and his course of work will serve as an indication of the track the others were following. During his first year he was engaged in a variety of light work—he was, in fact, a sort of “handy Jack,”—but the second year he went under the shepherd's direction, and he helped him with the sheep throughout the year. In the third year he assisted with the horses, and the fourth and fifth years he was engaged upon some of the more general farm work. In his sixth and seventh years he would probably have horses entrusted to his care. He was steadily persevering with the promise he made to himself when he was first apprenticed, that as his master provided for all his requirements, the wages he received should go into the

the Savings Bank. He knew the sorrow his father felt—good servant as he had been—in looking forward to the Union as his last home, which called forth from his youthful heart the reply :—

“I’ll do all I can, father ; and if I can get on well, my father shan’t go to the workhouse, nor mother either.”

This resolve settled into his young heart as a ruling principle of life. It had been quietly encouraged by Janet, and the example of the best men on the farm tended to confirm the idea upon the young man’s mind. Well did he remember Donald Macpherson’s argument with Charles King, the shepherd, showing that spending money for other purposes than the actual requirements of life was a habit which might be encouraged so as to become a positive necessity. On the other hand, he argued it might be controlled so that it offered little or no difficulty to keep it under command. There was every reason to hope that when his apprenticeship was expired he would have deposited £28 in the Savings Bank. His course of training in all kinds of farm work would make him a very competent farm labourer, and he would have attained thoroughly settled habits, which would lead him to avoid change of employers. The other apprentices were following on in the same direction, although some had not exercised as complete command over the needless spending of money, but still all had commenced paying some portion of their wages into the Savings Bank.

The spending of money is naturally influenced by association, but on the Abbots Farm the cottagers were in each case making their monthly payments for Government pensions and life insurance. The consequence was that a healthy tone pervaded the general surroundings,

and this had a very encouraging influence upon the boys, who are naturally imitators of those older than themselves. This preparation for the future became a source of great comfort when once it had established itself as a settled habit. The steady accumulation of more comforts in their homes, encouraged the labourers and their wives to greater industry and perseverance, which in their turn produced good fruit. Thus the two occupants of the Meadow Cottages—Charles King and Thomas Murch—had made some material advance in worldly prosperity during the three years they had now resided there. The money they had in the Savings Bank they had drawn out, and prudently used at the time they took the four acres of land attached to each of these cottages. They had since applied for more ground, but it was considered that any increase of the quantity was open to objection. To those who knew Jane King (the shepherd's wife) and Mary Murch (the wife of the head ploughman) four or five years previously, it was a matter of unbounded surprise how much they could manage to do and to direct, with some hints and occasional help from their husbands, given after their own work was finished. But with these and the other cottagers on the Abbots Farm, there was much material prosperity hidden from general observation, and entirely supplemental to the satisfactory appearances of clean cottages, good gardens, and happy labourers.

Mr. Newbold had now returned to his residence for nearly three weeks, greatly recovered from his accident, which had proved to be more tedious than had been expected, doubtless arising from the horse having fallen heavily upon the rider. From the moment he caught sight of Clara Watkins in the presence of Mr. Holmes

and Dr. Whichcord, up to the time of his return home Newbold had never seen her again. It cannot be denied that this was a great disappointment to him. As it now appeared quite prudent for him to leave his home, Janet invited him to the Holt Cottage with his sister and Marian Trevor, and, greatly to their surprise, he decided to accompany them. Clara Watkins was present according to arrangement, and the long hoped-for meeting took place. To all of those present—except Janet, her husband, and Newbold—the kind attention shown by Newbold to Clara Watkins was attributed to a feeling of gratitude for the considerate care with which he had been treated at the “Homes.” A feeling similar to this was warmly entertained by Gertrude Newbold for her, for from what she had seen of Clara Watkins she had formed an affectionate regard for her personally, and a very high opinion of her kindness and skill.

The evening passed with great rapidity, for all appeared as if a cloud of anxiety had been lifted from their minds, although that anxiety differed greatly with the several members of the group. Charlie Webster and his two pupils had been invited, chiefly to distract attention from the principal actors in the scene, and they became deeply interested with other members of the company. Janet acted with much skill in causing sufficient interruptions in the confidential exchange of views which was proceeding between Newbold and Clara Watkins, to prevent a too-pronounced appearance, without intruding much upon them. Before the evening was over, as Janet came near to Clara and Newbold—for they had again got into conversation—she was addressed by Clara, who said:—

“I have just been surprised to hear from Mr. Newbold

that he lives at the Manor House Farm—my dear old home—”

“Ah! Mrs. Holmes,” said Newbold, “it shall not be my fault if Miss Watkins does not find that it has preserved its old character, and I hope that in the future it will be a dearer home to her than it has ever been in the past.”

“I cannot but join you in that hope,” said Janet, “but if it should be so arranged, I shall claim the privilege of Clara being married from my house, just as her sister was before her. But if your secret is to be well kept, you will have to take some time to give matters their full consideration.”

“You see we are not strangers, Mrs. Holmes,” pleaded Newbold.

“That I readily admit,” said Janet, “but do you want the world to know that? Do you want to furnish subject-matter for the idle tittle-tattlers of the neighbourhood to gossip about? So long as we cannot keep persons so well occupied as to stop idle gossip, so long we must act with prudent reserve, and protect ourselves from the dangers arising from chatter. I will take care that you meet here again, and before long, but in the mean time remember that ‘silence is golden.’”

Newbold, on returning home, joked his sister and Marian Trevor at their evident enjoyment of the evening, and was fully satisfied that they had not detected that he was specially engaged in his own pleasures. It was not so with Charlie Webster, but half a word was quite sufficient for him. As soon as it appeared prudent to make known the engagement it was duly notified, and the wedding took place in due course from Janet's house.

Nearly five years had elapsed since Clara Watkins had left the Manor House Farm, clothed in mourning, and with a heavy heart she went forth to find her own support. The path was dangerous, but a friendly hand saved her, and, guided by that same hand, she had now returned in bridal array, and her heart full of joy. The source of danger having been controlled, it became at length the spring of much domestic happiness in the home of her childhood.

CHAPTER XI.

An Enemy safely secured.—Can it be made useful?—Advantages of Engineering Skill—A Clever Design—Incubators, and what came from them—A Good Example copied—Evening Amusements.

THE drainage of Capstone Bog, tapped a number of strong springs, and the consequence was a large supply of water, which by its volume fully accounted for the injury which had so long been occasioned to the surrounding land. It was now safely gathered within one channel, and the bog was gradually gaining firmness. The time had now come when Mr. Thomas was asked to give an appointment for inspecting the water supply, and recommending the best means for its use.

“Now, Mr. Holmes,” said he, “I shall be glad to understand what you want to accomplish by means of this water, and we will then shape our course accordingly. You have a strong supply, and it may be rendered valuable.”

“For estate purposes,” said Mr. Holmes, “we want to work a brick and tile machine, and at times we shall want to drive a saw mill and some other tools ; but it will very rarely be necessary to work them together. We ought to

be able to work the brick machine for the five summer months, but the sawing work will be chiefly done in the winter. If, besides this, we can help the tenant of the Birchwood Farm, I shall be very glad to do so."

"I will carefully consider the details of the scheme," said Mr. Thomas, "but my impression, at the first glance, is, that we shall be able to do all you want, and assist the occupant of Birchwood Farm. It will require some calculations to be made, but I will take the measurements which are necessary, and I will meet you in your office as soon as I can satisfy my mind on the possibilities of the case."

"I will leave these helpers at your disposal," said Mr. Holmes, "and if you can join us at dinner, we shall be pleased to see you."

The necessary measurements were all taken, and Mr. Thomas returned shortly before the dinner hour.

"How large a portion of our requirements shall you be able to provide for?" asked Mr. Holmes somewhat anxiously.

"Your requirements can be fully met," said Mr. Thomas, "if you like to make a good use of the natural facilities of the position. First of all, we have not only a good flow of water, but it is delivered at a high level. If we let that water run down the hill, and use it at the foot, we may avoid any material waste of the water, but we lose the pressure which it is now capable of giving, by reason of its height. Hence we must avoid this loss of power. I have calculated for a fair provision of water, which shall be equal to the summer work you mention, and I find that with very little loss of level, a reservoir can be made which shall store the necessary quantity of water. In

fact, there is a natural reservoir, almost complete in form, existing in the valley immediately below the Capstone Bog, and this could be rendered useful at a very small cost. Following the water-course a little further down, there is a place where any surplus of water could be stored for the use of Birchwood Farm. My impression is, that at a very moderate outlay you can command a valuable source of power, more than enough for the estate workshops, and brickyard."

"I am exceedingly pleased to hear what you report," said Mr. Holmes. "It exceeds my expectations; but I see that you must gain very much by preserving the water at the high level, and making a full use of the power."

"It is by the economy of power, and by its proper application, that we distinguish ourselves as engineers," said Mr. Thomas; "and in this direction there is room for great advances in the future, advances of which we can at present form a very imperfect conception."

"The dinner-bell calls us from labour to refreshment," said Mr. Holmes. "Here also is a source of power, and one we cannot afford to neglect. Food, brain-power, and bodily energy are all closely associated. However, let me introduce you to Mrs. Holmes, and we will adjourn to dinner."

"I hope you have been able to make a satisfactory report about the Capstone water," said Janet, "and that my husband's expectations will be fully secured."

"You may be perfectly satisfied on that point," said Mr. Thomas. "In fact, I think we shall exceed them, rather than the reverse."

"Such being the case, do you mind telling me," said

Janet, "whether that water will be injured in its use, or whether it could be used in the village afterwards."

"The water will not be in any way injured by the use to which we shall apply it," said Mr. Thomas. "My own impression is that after the water has been flowing for a few months it will be found good enough for use by the villagers, and it will continue to improve. The conveyance of water to Leaside will be a very small affair, and it certainly offers no difficulty."

"It would form a very pleasing feature in the improvement of the village, for a supply of water to be introduced," said Janet, "and I still hope to see it done."

"I am by no means sanguine," said Mr. Holmes, "for there are so many annoyances and impediments in carrying out improvements which are for the benefit of others. I suppose others find similar difficulties, and I must console myself with that reflection. The fact is, Mr. Thomas, that I have been endeavouring to purchase some of the houses in Leaside, so that our improvements of the village might be made more complete. There is one block of property, which is prominently situated, and the owners are not disposed to sell, neither will they consent to the improvements which are really necessary. We have offered to purchase the houses and goodwill, and to add a good bonus in addition, but it has been of no use. It is just a question now whether the Cross Keys public-house or the Squire shall control the future of the village."

"I do not think there need be any great difficulty in putting that matter right; and I know just the man to carry it through successfully. Success will depend upon the arrangement being kept in the strictest confidence,

and if you like the proposal I now suggest for your private consideration I will volunteer to see it completed."

"I will not decide immediately," said Mr. Holmes, "but I think it excellently designed, and will carefully consider it."

"It is excellent," said Janet. "I cannot see any objection whatever to it; but how is it that gentlemen are often so very skilful in their designs?"

"Engineers are likely to be so," said Mr. Thomas, "for their professional duties are one continued series of efforts to overcome natural difficulties. These have to be successfully mastered, or else a professional reputation may be sacrificed by failure in the attempt. We only recognise difficulties as conditions which have to be surmounted. Hence I hope that by the time the Capstone water is ready for use in the village, there will be nothing to delay its being satisfactorily employed."

The plans for the utilisation of the Capstone water were brought under Mr. Woodford's approval with little delay, and orders were given for the prosecution of the work. At the same time a lease of land in Leaside was granted to Mr. Jonas, of Crewe, for building a new and commodious hotel in the village, to be known as "The Woodford Arms," but that lease was forthwith transferred to Mr. Thomas, on behalf of a client who had agreed to advance the necessary funds for the building.

After a somewhat lengthened wedding trip, Mr. and Mrs. George Newbold returned to the Manor House Farm, and all traces of injury from the accident in the hunting-field had disappeared. Gertrude Newbold and Marion Trevor had kept house during their absence, and both were shortly to return to their homes. A good and trusty

bailiff had continued the careful management of the farm, and was able to report favourably upon its progress. Mrs. Watkins had consented to be the first visitor to her daughter upon her return home, and her arrival was anxiously looked forward to. Some years had elapsed since they had met, and much had happened in the interval, but there was very much cause for congratulation, and no one valued these changes more highly than Mrs. Watkins. One sole regret seemed to intrude itself upon her mind, in the desire that her husband had lived to see Clara, not only mistress of that home, but well able to discharge the duties devolving upon her. Her younger daughter Annie, who was residing about four miles distant, soon called with her husband, Tom Hughes, to welcome them back to the old home of the family. Newbold and Clara had seen little of Thomas Hughes, for they had only met on the wedding-day, but they were very anxious to establish an intimate association with Annie and her husband, and they consequently accepted an early invitation to pay a visit to the Forest Farm.

Much as Mrs. Watkins had been gratified to see Clara mistress of a thoroughly well-appointed house, she was still more surprised to find Annie making a much less expensive establishment, so replete with comfort and happiness. Before the gentlemen went for a walk amongst the stock, they accompanied the ladies to see the poultry arrangements.

"Hey day, Annie, my dear," said Mrs. Watkins; "who ever saw such a lot of fine chickens so early in the season? Why, how many have you here?"

"Rather more than three hundred," said Annie Hughes, "and in another three weeks they will have


been sent to London, for they are sold at the rate of six shillings per couple. Here is one of the advantages of using incubators and artificial mothers, and keeping the hens simply for laying eggs. If I kept these chickens for another three months they would not bring in more money. Then you see I make very short work in finishing my chickens for market, and in very good time for the asparagus."

"Then I suppose you find this part of the farming pays about as well as any," said George Newbold, "especially if you do not pay for the corn."

"We manage better than that, I can assure you, for all the corn I use is charged to me," said Annie Hughes, "and yet I made very nearly as much profit last season from my poultry and fruit as all the rest of the farm. It came in useful for rent day, and I was proud to help Tom to get over the difficulties of the year. I should increase the poultry very much, but this may be very soon overdone; they then become sickly and pine away. So that, after all, the total produce would not be increased by the additional number. It would therefore be very bad management; but the point to be aimed at is to keep as many as will thrive. Then, again, it is no use to keep fowls which are intended for the table just struggling on and picking up their living. I keep all of them on good food, and push them forward as rapidly as possible."

"Who attends to all your poultry?" asked Clara, "for I see that you have also a number of turkeys and ducks."

"I simply have the help of the youngest apprentice girl, and we manage it capitally," said Annie. "Then as the season advances I have my hands quite full, for the fruit comes and requires attention; but what labour I



want I secure, and I pay for it. I am not left to get help from the farm just as they can spare it; that would be ruin to my hopes of success. I have women who come and help when it is necessary, and I am glad to see that they are copying my example in their own gardens."

"Well, well, who would have thought that Annie, who would not condescend to touch anything in the kitchen, would become such a capital little manager," said Mrs. Watkins. "I am proud of you, my dear; I am glad to see that you can do your duty."

"I enjoy it more than I can tell you," said Annie Hughes, "and I am infinitely more happy than I used to be when I real'y could not do anything useful. The days now scarcely seem long enough; they fly more quickly than I like, and we have such jolly evenings. Tom would not let me neglect my music, French, or German, so we manage to have most enjoyable evenings, and I translate to Tom some of the scientific reports, for variety."

"That is very true," said Tom Hughes. "I am thus able to keep to the front as regards much of the work which is proceeding at home and on the continent, thanks to a good wife, and the valuable course of study I had at Rodney College."


"I am right glad to know that you are a Rodney College man," said George Newbold; "this will be an additional bond of union between us for the future."

CHAPTER XII.

Successful Farming on Light Land—A Word in Season—The Sheet Anchor of Good Farming—New Cottages for Labourers—Fair Play is a Jewel—Elementary Schools around the Estate—A Teachers' Conference and its Results.

THE Forest Farm chiefly consisted of light land, but it had been greatly improved under the care of Mr. Tom Hughes as tenant. It was a sandy loam, and very much disposed to be a hungry soil. Hence, although it was land which could be worked in any weather, there had been a serious loss of manure because of its want of absorptive power, and hence it had been looked upon as hungry land. It was always wanting manure, and yet it never appeared to have had enough. Such soils are far too frequent; hence, although their cultivation is easy and pleasant, there is little chance of growing corn upon them with advantage. But with all these objections, Tom Hughes appeared to secure satisfactory results, and George Newbold was naturally anxious to learn the secret of his success.

"We were on the wrong track for a long time," said Tom Hughes, "and my father was getting very tired of the farm, at the time I was sent to Rodney College under the Squire's Scholarship. But during one of the College



vacations I was riding over the Holt Farm, and met our present steward, who was then residing with his father. He drew my attention to an error in our practice respecting the growth of clover, which has led us to make very great improvement in this land. I remember, as if it had been but yesterday, he said, 'Depend upon it, Hughes, if your father were to use slowly soluble artificial manures for his root crops, either bones or fully reduced superphosphates, with just a dash of ordinary superphosphate; and instead of putting his farmyard manure upon the wheat, put it upon the young clovers, things would soon look better upon his farm.' My father gave the suggestion a fair trial, and I have steadily followed out the same system. It has made this farm a fairly profitable holding in any ordinary times. I made some excellent clover hay, and as a rule I cut it twice for hay in the first summer. One-half of the proceeds of that hay I lay out in good cotton cake and Egyptian beans, or some similar kind of corn for fattening sheep, and I find I gain greatly in its use upon the land. It appears to be very important, giving the sheep both kinds of food, for the mixed food does about double work. But it is curious to notice the sheep if we stop the corn, even though we may give more cake, for they look dull, and there is a sudden loss of life and energy."

"I suppose, then, they get as fond of beans as an old horse," said George Newbold.

"That is no matter of fancy," said Tom Hughes, "for when having corn they jump about, and stretch themselves, and show every sign of laying on flesh. Thus it has happened that we have relied more upon clover than upon roots, and the change it has made in this farm is

surprising. The ground is increasing in its quantity of vegetable matter every year, and it holds fairly well any manure used upon it."

"Did you alter the form of phosphate you used?" asked George Newbold.

"Yes, we commenced at once the plan of putting ground bones into the superphosphate two or three months before we were going to use it; and thus we reduced the superphosphate into a slowly soluble state, thereby avoiding much loss."

"In any case I must commend you for the good look of your crops, for they are certainly very promising."

"Very fair for poor land," said Tom Hughes. "You must not forget that we are not on the richer lands of the vale. It is surprising to me what heavy crops they are growing on the Abbotts Farm. Depend upon it, good farming pays best, when you have a rich soil to work upon. Your farm will come round in a year or two into a good condition if you like to make it. The draining upon your farm was thoroughly well done. There were no half measures in that improvement, and I must give our steward full credit for that. My father saw some of the draining done on that farm twenty-five years ago, and he also saw this last drainage. He told me that they were greatly different, for in the first case there was no satisfactory oversight, and many of the drains were never perfect from the first; whereas the special care taken with the recent draining has secured thoroughly good work."

"I hope your judgment may prove to be correct, for now that I have recovered my health, and settled down at the Manor House Farm, I hope to find the farm satisfactory."

"This is where we are going to build our new cottages or the men," said Tom Hughes. "The gardens are already fenced in, and the spring work is forward. We have just drawn up these bricks for the building."

"That is one of a tenant's penalties," said George Newbold, "having to cart the material for new work."

"It is not so in this case," said Tom Hughes, "for I sent in my account for horse-hire, and I had a cheque sent me on the first weekly pay day."

"Did you ever hear of such a thing before?" asked George Newbold.

"It is very unusual, but it is only just and right. Mr. Holmes told me that as I paid my share of the interest on the outlay, it was perfectly fair for me to be paid for any work I did. If a stranger had done the work, he would have been paid for it, and it would then have formed a part of the capital outlay, and why not so in my case? I think it was very just of him, but after all it is nothing more than fair."

When the gentlemen returned from their walk they found the ladies actively engaged in conversation.

"Annie has been telling me of some of the afternoon meetings she has had of the wives of the labourers on the farm," said Clara Newbold. "I am quite delighted at her success, and how nicely they all seem to get on together."

"I followed Mr. Holmes' course of procedure as nearly as I could," said Annie Hughes, "for it succeeded so well that there was no inducement to make any change. I hear that Mrs. Ellis, of Birchwood, and Mrs. Morgan, of Holmwood, are making good progress. It is very probable that others are doing the same, and another winter I hope

it will become general throughout the estate, for it is an excellent work, well worthy of our best support."

"We must think about it at the Manor House Farm," said Clara Newbold, "but we have had so much to attend to lately, there really has been no time to give even a thought to it. I should like to begin the work before my mother leaves, for it will be a treat to her to see the women again she once knew so well."

"It will, indeed, be a treat to me, my dear," said Mrs. Watkins, "and it will be rendered so much the more pleasing to me, to see you able and willing to aid them by instruction and good advice. I never expected to see that done by either of you."

"When you have had that pleasure, mother," said Annie Hughes, "you must come up here for one of my meetings, and see how capitally we get on here. You must now learn to think of us, as having thrown aside all our girlish fancies and follies, and as being useful members of society."

It is scarcely necessary to say that before Mrs. Watkins completed her visits to her daughters, she was gratified by seeing both acting in cordial co-operation in the performance of their respective duties. She was also well aware of the fact that the guiding spirit, which had thus far contributed so greatly to the happiness and prosperity of her daughters, was still watching over their progress with feelings of intense satisfaction.

Another sphere of duty was now occupying Janet's attention, for the time had at length come when the work in the Elementary Schools had to be carefully considered. There were no less than five of these schools, in which the children of the labourers of the estate were receiving

instruction. The system under which these were worked was exceedingly good, and good teachers were in charge of the schools, but even these suffered from a want of some sympathy, to give additional interest to their duties. One fact was tolerably clear throughout—that the work done by properly trained teachers, who had duly qualified under the Education Department, compared most favourably with that done in other schools by teachers without any recognised qualification. They were nominally of higher grade, but certainly of less educational power. The system was good, and the teachers were specially competent, so that the question was restricted to the inquiry—how far their opportunities were fully made use of. In consultation with her husband, it was decided to invite the masters and mistresses of these schools to a friendly conference at Holt Cottage.


That gathering was not only intended to be useful, but also agreeable, and we may be sure that under Janet's guidance both of these objects were secured. It appeared to be a fact, that the children of some farmers attended these schools, and that the number was steadily increasing. Those who sent their children to these schools, did so for one or two reasons—either from an inability or an unwillingness to pay higher fees, or from a knowledge of the fact that in these elementary schools competent teachers were appointed, and that their work was regularly and severely tested. No similar test existed in connection with many of the schools which competed with them, and the consequence was that much inferior work was done by untrained teachers. Many who admitted the excellence of the work, hesitated to take advantage of the system by a reason which they would not declare, but,

strictly speaking, having as a foundation a little false pride.


The action taken by the Education Department, in admitting the Principles of Agriculture as a subject for instruction in these schools, had long commended itself to the favour of those most competent to judge of its utility. The opinions of the teachers entirely agreed as to the importance of instruction in the subject, and the beneficial influence it would exert. They had this further advantage, that the great majority of them had attended the science classes in Wrexborough, and were thus thoroughly well prepared for taking part in the work, and with a good promise of successful results.

One difficulty which had long been felt in connection with the Science Classes was, that the Science Teachers could not give sufficient time to go down to, and gradually raise to the level of a science lecture, those children who had not previously learnt anything of the subject, hence they knew absolutely nothing of the matter to be treated upon. Such a preparation for these Science Classes is by no means limited to those who have been educated in elementary schools, and hence easy means which secured such preliminary instructions, were calculated to have a wide-spread and important influence. This was an advantage which every teacher present immediately saw was of the greatest importance, and it was resolved that in each school proper measures should be taken forthwith for commencing instruction in the Principles of Agriculture.

The desirability of school gardens (such as had been recommended by Mr. Wilkinson, of Harrow) was then freely discussed, and the prevailing feeling was that their value would greatly depend upon the teacher, and his own




personal tact in its use. As a means for illustrating—and giving a reality of form to—instruction in the Principles of Agriculture, it could not be denied that such gardens gave many valuable opportunities for practical education. At any rate at one of the schools an attempt at a school garden appeared desirable, and half an acre of ground was promised for the use of the Leaside School. Every opportunity was to be given for the masters of the other schools to watch the progress made, and suggestions were invited for any improvements upon the system adopted. The free interchange of views amongst these teachers of the elementary schools, and those who were anxious for an extension of agricultural education upon the Holt Castle estate, was in every way calculated to promote the object, and strong hopes were entertained that its influence would be useful.



CHAPTER XIII.

The Agent meets Dr. Forester—Rent-paying Machinery demands Care—Mistaken Ideas of Ownership—Trespassers shot before Trial—Innocence established Too Late—Friends in Disguise—An Impartial Tribunal.

THE time had now arrived when it was necessary for Mr. Holmes to visit some of the out-lying portions of the property in the south of England. This was an entirely new district to him, and judging from the feelings expressed by the tenantry of this property, it had seldom been inspected by his predecessor. Dr. Thomson, of Rodney College, gave Mr. Holmes a letter of introduction to his friend Dr. Forester, who having exchanged the duties of agricultural tuition for those of practical farming, had been settled for many years within easy reach of some of the property. When Mr. Holmes left his home on this tour of inspection he was accompanied by his wife, as they had accepted an invitation to visit Dr. Forester at Bradford on the Yeo. This gentleman was well known to possess an extensive experience in the agriculture of the south and west, and for this reason, amongst others, Dr. Thomson had been very anxious to throw Mr. Holmes within the range of his friend's influence. The warm cordiality of a generous welcome, soon added an additional



charm to the pleasure of meeting the several members of the family group.

"I really must congratulate you, Dr. Forester, upon the beautiful situation of your property," said Mr. Holmes, "and upon the luxuriance of the district around you. I do not know when I have seen anything more lovely than the scene from your house."

"If beauty of situation were all we needed to make us happy and prosperous, I acknowledge we should have little to complain of here," said Doctor Forester, "but there are some drawbacks, which will become more evident to you after you have seen more of the district. This farm does not happen to be my property, although I have paid in rent, during an occupation of nearly twenty years, almost the freehold value of the land. No, I am a rent-paying machine, and I can only say to you, that I hope you will at all times do your very best to take care that machinery of this kind is rightly treated. We tenant farmers have done far more for the landed proprietors of this kingdom than is generally known, and I am sorry to say that in sadly too many cases, many of us have suffered the penalty that befell the goose which laid the golden eggs. Now, I should like to know what your idea of rent really is, speaking as a Rodney College man, and as a land agent. What is it we pay rent for?"

"I imagine that rent is paid for the right to make use of the plant-food which is in the land you occupy," said Mr. Holmes; "but, of course, with the reasonable provision that the land must be maintained in fair condition."

"I can agree with you so far as that, but how is it when a person is in the position of having to add to the

land all—or nearly all—the plant-food he requires for his crops? There is much land in which there is little or no reserve of fertility for crops to draw upon.”


“In such cases it really resolves itself into a question as to the amount of rent,” said Mr. Holmes. “Strictly speaking, it is unreasonable to pay for the right to draw upon a reserve fund, when you find that there is no reserve fund existing. It is as bad as agreeing to pay a person for a loan, and although you find that he has little or no money to lend, you have still to pay the agreed consideration.”

“So long as times were fairly good,” said Dr. Forester, “farmers managed to keep up to their undertakings, but many a layer of golden eggs has ceased to do so, and you may depend upon it that that sort of bird will hereafter be much more rare.”

“I hope you do not take a desponding view of the future of agriculture?” asked Mr. Holmes.

“That the position of the farmers has been seriously prejudiced I do not deny,” said Dr. Forester; “but we need not despair of the future, provided we prepare ourselves for meeting the altered circumstances of the position. However, we must postpone this subject, or the ladies will have just cause to censure us.”

“I have listened to your remarks with very great interest,” said Janet, “and I shall be sorry if you discontinue the subject on my account, for I really like to gather information of this kind. There is such a confusion of ideas floating in the minds of persons, that it is quite pleasant to hear any reasonable expression of confidence in the future of farming. I should, however, very much like to hear from you, Dr. Forester, how you find the



farm labourers of this neighbourhood. Are they generally satisfactory to their employers?"

"I have no reason to complain," said Dr. Forester; "I have done what was fair towards them, and I am glad to say that a feeling of confidence has been established between us. I had only one difficulty, and I think that was taken as a test by each party. It happened soon after I had taken the farm—in fact, before I had settled into my house. Late one afternoon I received notice that some of my furniture had arrived at our railway station, and I wanted it brought into the house as quickly as possible. I told the bailiff we must have the horses sent down to pull up the vans. When he gave the orders to the carters, one said, 'My horses are put up, and they sha'n't go;' and it appeared that all had made up their minds that their horses should not turn out. I told the bailiff that I was under the impression that I had purchased and paid for those horses, and that they belonged to me and not to the men. With the same, I said to the bailiff, 'Tell the men of the mistake they have made, and say that we are ready to take the horses to the railway station ourselves.' Whether the men enjoyed the joke or not I do not know, but they were wise enough to see their mistake, and from that time they seemed to gather new ideas as to the ownership of the horses. All things considered, we have been very good friends for many a long day. . . . I have heard much of the work done at the Abbotts Farm with the labourers, and, judging by the report which I have received, it appears as if a somewhat similar spirit influenced both of us in our proceedings. Your husband probably takes after my friend Dr. Thomson, of Rodney College, whilst he and

I hold many views in common. You probably know that Thomson and I are intimate friends—almost like brothers—and the more we have seen of each other, the more has our friendship been confirmed.”

“My husband and my brother both studied under Dr. Thomson,” said Janet, “and I think his influence has permanently impressed their minds with much which is valuable. I really long to see him, for I have heard so much of him.”

At breakfast on the following morning one of Dr. Forester’s pupils apologised for his late appearance, as he had been delayed by shooting some wild pigeons. It happened that in a piece of peas, then in pod, these pigeons were making a very determined attack, so much so, indeed, that within a few minutes after each shot they returned to the field. The result was that six of their number had been shot, and brought into the kitchen.

“Is there any question about the guilt of those pigeons?” asked the Doctor.

“None whatever, I should think, sir,” said Ernest Southwell, “for I saw them busily pecking at the peas.”

“Surely that is only a case of suspicion,” said Dr. Forester. “I suppose you saw them pecking something up, but what that something was is as yet undecided. We have no choice now but to examine the crops of these birds to settle this point; although it is very much like the old law of shoot them first and try them after.”

“I think it was a well-deserved punishment,” said Ernest Southwell, “and, although it is only circumstantial evidence, I believe that nine juries out of ten would have returned a verdict of guilty.”

"That I do not doubt for a moment," said Dr. Forester, "but let us have fair play even for a wild pigeon, especially as we have now the chance of proving their innocence or their guilt."

As soon as the breakfast was over, very little time elapsed before an examination took place, and, singular as it may appear to some persons, not a single pea was found to have been taken by one of the six birds, for they had been feeding upon the seeds of the common Fumitory (*Fumaria Cupreolata*) and other weeds, of which no less than eight hundred seeds were found in the crop and gizzard of a single bird.

"What is the lesson we ought to learn from this, sir?" said Ernest Southwell. "Are we to consider wild pigeons as amongst the farmers' friends?"


"That would perhaps be going rather too far," said Dr. Forester. "You see that these birds were not only perfectly innocent, but were really doing us good service. I would therefore say, keep your mind open to conviction, and learn more of their habits, before even wild pigeons are permanently condemned. They take their toll in true miller's style, but it may be that even these give the farmer a good service for the charge they make. I well remember being often challenged as a friend of rooks, and on one occasion a friend came to me in a great hurry, and in high glee, saying, 'Come, Dr. Forester, quickly, and see the rooks at the turnips. You can see them pulling them up bodily. See them, and forthwith renounce your faith in them.' We went to the field, and I fear many a jury would have passed a verdict of guilty upon those birds also. We walked to the spot where the mischief had been done, and there the young plants,

bitten from their roots, lay spread on the surface. 'Do you want any clearer proof than this?' asked my friend. 'Certainly I do,' said I, 'for do you imagine that the rooks pulled these plants up simply for mischief. Besides, if you notice, every one of these plants has a sickly leaf or two on it, and this may perhaps solve the mystery.' We examined around, and soon found some more plants similarly distinguished by sickly leaves, and on an examination of the roots we generally found two, and sometimes four or more, large surface grubs busy at work. Those grubs were the larva of a species of *Noctua*, a genus of moths very destructive to roots, and even garden plants. 'How is that now, umpire?' I said to my friend, and a verdict of Acquittal was promptly given."

"But do you think, sir, that rooks do no harm to farm crops?" asked Ernest Southwell.

"My plea for rooks," said Dr. Forester, "is, that as they do not eat corn when they can find more natural food in the form of grubs and insects, if you give them plenty of opportunity for feeding upon the latter, they will do good service to the land, and consequently have the less necessity for feeding upon corn. They must, and will, have food of some kind; but it is a strong plea in their favour if we admit that they decidedly prefer doing us good service, and that they only do us an injury when they are compelled to do so, from want of a more natural supply of food."

"Really, Dr. Forester, this has been a most enjoyable conversation," said Janet, "and quite as useful as a lecture. It is very evident that farmers do not yet know all their friends; but how sad it is to think that many a friendly



helper is condemned to death, even at the very time they are labouring in the farmers' interest."

"Well, ladies, we must leave you," said Dr. Forester, "that is, if Mr. Holmes is to see much of the neighbourhood before dinner. You will be well cared for, Mrs. Holmes, in our absence, for I am sure my niece Patna, and my daughters, will not fail in looking after your welfare. Before we start, I wish one of you would call up to the farm by telephone, and ask where the bailiff is. No sooner said than done, for the reply came back, "Gone towards the water-meadows," and in that direction the gentlemen started for their walk.

CHAPTER XIV.

Future Prospects of Farming—Feeding on Pedigree Barley—The Token in use—What one Mouse did, and another paid for—Good Herbage—A Silver Grace Cup, and a Time-honoured Toast—A Tenant protects himself from an Increase of Rent.

As soon as the gentlemen were fairly started on their walk—for Dr. Forester and his two pupils accompanied Mr. Holmes—the conversation naturally reverted to the future prospects of farming.

“I was very glad to gather from your remarks last night, that you do not despond as to the future success of our agriculturists,” said Mr. Holmes.

“If they continue on their old track,” said Dr. Forester, “they must be beaten, but I do not think they are in danger of doing this. During the last thirty or forty years there has been a very eager demand for land. If a farm were about to become vacant, twenty, forty, or perhaps sixty applicants sought for the tenancy. Farmers rushed one over the other for land; they agreed to give rentals which they knew at the time were above, and sometimes very much above, the value of the land. But this imprudent and unreasonable desire for land raised the rentals above their proper level, and those who entered into agreements contrary to their own better judgment,

have made serious losses in consequence. You must bear this in mind as a fact—that in a great majority of these cases they knew they were agreeing to give more than the land was worth. But by these injudicious agreements they have not only injured themselves, but they have also deceived the land-owners, who felt perfectly satisfied that farmers were far too shrewd men of business to give half-a-crown for a florin. Rents thus imprudently raised, must fall to a fair and reasonable amount, and in future the tenants and the landlord (or his agent) must negotiate with each other as men of business. If in any one of our great national industries, men had thus been over-bidding each other in making purchases, if they had been equally under dictation as to the terms of agreement, they would have collapsed long before the farmer has done. Depend upon it the first step that will be taken will be a settlement of reasonable rents, and the land must be held under business-like agreements. The next step will be improvements in farm management. Each section of the work will have to be done thoroughly well. In order to do this, many men will have to reduce their farms, so that they may not have more land than they have proper capital to cultivate. The time for half-measures has gone, and I am glad to say, gone for ever; that you may depend upon. To work the land to the best advantage, farmers must move forward with the times, and deal with changing circumstances as intelligent men who know what they are doing. Here it is that the Government Science Classes are doing so much good. I have recently taken part in these examinations, and I have been astounded to see the skill and ability displayed by many of those who come up for examination. That is a great and useful work, and it

will become increasingly valuable, just as measures are carried out for the improvement of the teachers. Farming gives opportunity for careful thought beyond any other occupation, and this fact is now recognised by those engaged in that business."

"I am exceedingly pleased to learn your views," said Mr. Holmes, "and the more so because they so strongly confirm my previous conclusions. I know full well the value of science instruction, for I have passed through the Science Classes, and afterwards I went to Rodney College under a Government Scholarship, and I know that the advantages I gained have been exceedingly great. But we worked hard for success, and the College staff did all that men could do for our progress, hence very few of the young men who went to Rodney College failed to secure the College Diploma."

"I know something of College work," said Dr. Forester, "for in my fifteen or sixteen years' duty I saw much of it, with its many joys and some disappointments. However, here comes Farmer Shergold. How is your land working to-day? Shall you be able to finish your sowing to-day?"

"Yes, sir, I think we shall finish all right to-day, and the land works thoroughly well for it. I am sorry to say that I have had to send off one hundred and twenty sheep to the pound this morning. They were half-starved, for they have been kept very short of food by their owner, so they broke into our pedigree barley, and they have done a terrible lot of damage. We shall have two ripenings in that crop come harvest time, for what is eaten back will be later than the rest. I wish you would come and value the damage. Here is the token, and now Mr. George cannot get the sheep without it, so I hope to make him

pay, for I have told him times enough, and we have lost enough."

"What is the token?" said Mr. Holmes.

"It is done in this way," said Farmer Shergold. "I get a hazel stick from the hedge as large round as your thumb, and I make three deep cuts around it, and then I split the stick. The Heyward has one half sent to him with the sheep, and I have the other, and he won't give up the sheep until he receives this token, which matches his half. He does not want any written order—he must have the token before he lets the sheep go. I see that Mr. Slack has something wrong in his field. If you will excuse me, I will go and see what is the matter."

"We will all go," said Dr. Forester, "for the old boy seems puzzled; at any rate, he is rubbing his head to arouse his intellect. What is the matter, neighbour?"

"The worse luck for me—this bullock is lame from being muscrop; but I thank you kindly, sir."

"But what is muscrop?" asked Mr. Holmes.

"Why you see, sir, if a mouse runs over the bullock's joints, he is sure to go lame, and all of a tremble-like at once. Them mice be sad torments," said Farmer Slack.

"But do you really believe that a mouse would injure the bullock any more than a fly would?" asked Mr. Holmes.

"Ah, sir, I see you be a stranger to these parts. May be you'll know more about these things some day," said Farmer Slack.

"I reciprocate your courtesy very warmly," said Mr. Holmes.

"Is that how you would cure the beast?" asked Farmer Slack. "We don't do it like that here. What

we do is to pull him backwards three times under a bramble that has rooted at the end, or else we put a mouse in an augur-hole in the bole of an ash tree, but a mountain ash be best."

Whilst this conversation was proceeding the cow-leech from the village came up, and he decided that the poor beast was not muscrop (mouse croupe), but that he had the crankams. On Mr. Holmes asking what the crankams was, he was told that it was a disease of the ox, and we have no doubt the cow-leech should have said a disease of the hocks, for the animal was evidently suffering from an attack of rheumatism."

"We must now be off to the water-meadows," said Dr. Forester. "You may take my word for it, Mr. Holmes, that in the proper cultivation of grass is one of our greatest hopes for the future of farming. I need not tell you how small is the proportion of persons, who can distinguish between the grasses and the weeds of our pastures. In many a case, the weeds have displaced a large portion of the grasses, and, instead of having a valuable and nutritious food for stock, it is poor and almost worthless. But we have this satisfaction, that just as good management is exercised, so do the better grasses take the lead again. Our meadows here have already been fed off once this season, and, mark this fact, that all this food was produced before the dry pastures around had even commenced growing. It is one of the great glories of the South, that we can by proper irrigation of our meadows, secure an early growth of grass, and of the highest feeding character."

"I must look very carefully into this system," said Mr. Holmes, "for it is successfully carried out in the

midland counties, and it may be more extensively practised."

With this object in view, the water-meadows were carefully inspected, and the details of management freely discussed, after which they all returned to dinner.

"I have been telling Dr. Forester to-day," said Mr. Holmes on his return, "that if I had to select an estate, on which to send a young fellow to learn farming, I should certainly send him here for a part of his time, for I have been very much pleased with the farm and its management."

"I have been equally pleased, I can assure you," said Janet. "Amongst other things, I have been learning some new dairy work, and I am sure you will be pleased to know, that this has all been explained to me by my three young friends—Ada, Katie, and Minnie Forester. They have been my guardians during the morning, whilst Patna has been otherwise engaged."

"But you may be sure, Mr. Holmes, that the advantage has not been all on one side," said Katie Forester, "for we have heard all about Wyndham College, and the clever girls they are sending out. It almost makes one want to go to college. It would be so awfully jolly to know how everything should be done, and why we succeed in our work."

"I should so much like to see the Homes on the Crescent," said Ada Forester, "that is the portion I should like to see. It would be so nice to be able to help the invalids, and watch them getting better day by day."

"If I had my choice," said Minnie Forester, "I should like to spend some time at Holt Cottage with Mrs. Holmes, and see something of her dear little boys, Horace and Charlie. Their likenesses are enough to make you

love them. And I also want to see how the cottagers get on with their little dairies, and their large gardens."

"I am very glad you have expressed your wishes so distinctly," said Mr. Holmes, "for your father has arranged to pay me a visit this summer, and you could easily come under his escort."

"That is a capital proposal," said Janet. "You may all leave it in my hands, and I will carry it out."

The summons for dinner quickly changed the direction of the conversation. As the dessert was subsequently placed upon the table, a silver Grace Cup, which had been partially screened by flowers during dinner, became more distinctly revealed, and naturally attracted attention.

"You will excuse me, I hope," said Janet, "if I comment on the beauty of that cup."

"I am very proud of it myself," said Dr. Forester, "and in my opinion, no one can praise it too highly. That cup was presented to me when I left the College, by a lot of very good fellows, amongst whom I had laboured for fifteen or sixteen years, and the great majority of whom had really endeared themselves to me. You can imagine, then, how I love to look upon it, and how much I treasure it. You see it has the College very beautifully embossed upon it."

"It is indeed most artistically executed," said Janet, "and the monarch of our forests crests the cover. How very appropriate, considering the name of the person to whom it was presented."

The time-honoured toast of "Our Friends" was duly celebrated as the loving cup passed from hand to hand, each one's memory naturally bringing to mind some worthy representatives of that body. Many and various

were the subjects discussed by that happy group, but, before the day ended, it had been arranged that Dr. Forester should accompany Mr. Holmes over Mr. Woodford's property in that district, and a three days' absence was accordingly provided for.

Neither expected to find that property in very first-rate condition, but the inspection showed that the farms had all the appearance of a property which had been thoroughly neglected.

"I well remember," said Dr. Forester, "making the purchase of a property which had been in Chancery for some years, and on my first visit as owner, one of the tenants expressed a hope that he would be allowed to continue the occupation. I told him in reply, that I did not consider any one worthy of being entrusted with land, who would neglect it as he had done. What do you imagine was his reply? 'Oh, sir,' said he, 'that be very true, but as I knew the land must be sold, I let it go as bad as ever I could, hoping it would sell cheap, and that I might get a long take at a cheap rent.' I have never seen anything so bad as that property until the last two days, and it seems to me that your tenants have been carefully guarding themselves from any rise of rent."

"I must confess that I have never seen such a wretched lot of farms," said Mr. Holmes. "The only wonder to me is that they have paid their rents so regularly."

"They are not rented high enough," said Dr. Forester, "for you see it is good land, and it is almost wasted."

"It is rather curious even to talk of raising rents just now," said Mr. Holmes, "but I must put all the facts plainly before the Squire on my return home, and recommend a definite course of procedure."


CHAPTER XV.

A Tutor in Rural Economy for the Squire's Son—A School Garden
— The Woodford Arms — Village Improvements — Wives of
Tenantry in Conference — An old Friend wants rest — Filial
Regard.

Soon after Mr. Holmes' return home, an opportunity arose for informing Mr. Woodford, somewhat fully, as to the neglected condition of the Wyckham property, which he had inspected. It was evident that its improvement would require a considerable amount of personal attention, and very extensive alterations, hence it was decided to carry out forthwith certain urgent requirements, leaving more important works to wait for at least a few months longer.

"I was consulting Dr. Whichcord yesterday respecting my son's health," said the Squire, "and he strongly urges me to give him an entire change of occupation for a twelvemonth, before he goes up to Oxford. I should like him to spend this time with some well-educated gentleman farmer, for he will be none the worse landlord for understanding something of the matters his agent will have to refer to him from time to time."

"On the other hand," said Mr. Holmes, "if you will allow me to say so, he will be better able to judge of the merits of the proposals which will come before him in



after years. I venture to think that as time rolls on we shall have important aids to Agriculture introduced, which will in their adoption require an extended co-operation between the owners and the occupiers of the soil. The importance of landlords being acquainted with the Principles of Agriculture, will become more and more a necessity of the day, and if your son gains some insight into Agricultural matters now, he will be the better prepared for receiving instruction in Oxford, under the Professor of Rural Economy."

"There is much force in what you say respecting its advantages," said the Squire; "and now as to the best place for him to go."

"That appears to me very much a question of climate," said Mr. Holmes. "We have throughout this country a large number of gentlemen occupying land, any one of whom would probably meet your approval, so that the first question is really one as to the district."

"The South of England and a dry soil appears to be desirable," said the Squire.

"There is Dr. Forester at Bradford, on the Yeo, with whom I was staying last week, he takes two pupils, and I do not think you can do better than secure his next vacancy," said Mr. Holmes. "The climate is good, and there is some nice farming going on which would be suitable. If, however, regular College instruction is desired in a mild climate, then the College of Agriculture on the Hampshire Downs, will be well worthy of your consideration. Would it not be a good plan for you to visit these places with your son?"

"That will be the best thing to do," said the Squire, "and I will write to both places, so as to call when

we shall be sure of finding them at home. How did your little gathering of the teachers pass off? Was it satisfactory?"

"I think we shall have no difficulty now in getting the early stages of the Principles of Agriculture taken up in the Elementary Schools in and around this estate. I have promised to help the Leaside school with half an acre of ground for a school garden, as being calculated to encourage the movement, and I thought the little piece which Jane Lewis recently gave notice of leaving, would be very suitable for the purpose."

"I leave that to you," said the Squire, "and I am sure you will act wisely on your own discretion; but it is very interesting to me to notice the way in which you are helping forward this educational movement. High and low, rich and poor, all seem to be helped onwards in one common direction, and in each case I must admit you have shown strong reasons for the work being carried out. Many think we shall have a hard fight to hold our own in the future, but whether that be so or no, we shall be none the worse for each of us knowing what we are about, and whither we are going. There has been too much drifting in the past, but we may now hope to be able to hold a definite course; and I can only say, 'May that course be prosperous for all of us, for we are all rowing in the same boat.'"


The building of the new hotel in the village was progressing rapidly, and its very pretty style of structure was so unusual for such purposes, that it bid fair to attract attention and be excessively popular. It was about this time, that a stranger called at the Cross Keys Inn in Leaside, to take some refreshment, and after a

time the landlord entered into conversation with him. The result was that he soon discovered that this person had come for the purpose of looking at the Woodford Arms Hotel, with a view to taking it. All the landlord could say to the contrary, failed to satisfy him that there was no room for two good inns. Seeing that he had been unsuccessful, the landlord did not allow the stranger to go away without strongly recommending him to purchase the Cross Keys business, instead of taking the new house. Ultimately the visitor received a firm and satisfactory offer of the property for three days, and by an early post the purchase was completed. Little now remained to be done, except to make a transfer of the property, which in due course was made over to Mr. Woodford. The strategy of the Woodford Arms Hotel was now no longer necessary, but the building was proceeded with according to arrangement, and it proved to be so singularly suitable for a Village Club, that some thought it must have been originally designed for that purpose. Nothing now remained to prevent the general improvement of Leaside being arranged, and carried into effect.

Building operations were also proceeding with rapidity upon the estate, for twenty cottages and the new workshops were steadily proceeding towards completion. The engineering work was also making satisfactory progress. Birchwood Farm had been entirely relieved of the trouble arising from the Capstone Bog being so close a neighbour. Lands which had long been liable to various kinds of blight, in consequence of the vegetation becoming checked and injured by the cold vapours carried from the bog, now presented a series of healthy and vigorous crops, on which these blights were powerless to make any

impression. Mr. Ellis was thoroughly satisfied with the improvements produced in this, the first season which followed the drainage, and he was anticipating still greater advantages from the assistance of some of the drainage water, for driving some threshing and chaff-cutting machinery. The course was now perfectly clear for conveying the water to the village of Leaside, after doing its required work as a motive power. It had been decided to throw a space of ground in the centre of the village into a green—in fact, restoring it to its long-lost condition; and around this village green a series of iron standards were fixed from which water could be drawn for the cottagers' use. The overflow water was afterwards passed to some grass land below the village, and was there used for irrigation purposes.


The alterations in Leaside soon made it present the appearance of a very pretty village. Two old and dilapidated cottages which interfered with the view of Leaside Church had been removed, and a neatly-constructed Lichgate marked the entrance, between two very old yew trees. The school houses and the school garden were within a short distance, and these also faced towards the green. The old trees standing in the green, appeared to have put on more than their usual foliage, in acknowledgment of the newly-made grass lawn which had been formed around them. The Leaside Club-house naturally attracted attention by reason of its almost finished appearance, and it added a very pleasing feature to the scene. The improvements were not limited to these more prominent objects, for the sanitary arrangements had undergone a thorough amendment, so that, as far as human care could provide, the fevers which had



been only too frequent in the village were now fairly placed to the disadvantage.


The arrangements for the Rent Audit were very much the same as in the previous year, and again did the tenantry meet within the Castle Hall. They were, however, greatly surprised to hear from the Squire, that he had arranged to send his son to learn something of farming at Bradford on the Yeo. He told them, that his chief object was to secure in their future landlord, that sympathy which arises from a full knowledge of a farmer's troubles and difficulties. He hoped after a time that his son would pass a regular course of study in Oxford, and subsequently more fully acquaint himself with the practice of agriculture. Thus he believed that in the future, he would not only be their landlord, but one ready to do all in his power to promote the prosperity of his tenants, in which prosperity he would naturally share.

Not long after the rent audit, invitations were again issued to the wives of the tenantry to meet Mrs. Woodford at the Castle, in conference on the condition of the farm labourers upon the estate. The reception was arranged very much on the plan adopted in the previous year, but it was now evident that very material progress had been made during the interval. Six of these ladies had held afternoon meetings in each week throughout the winter months, and in each case they reported themselves satisfied with the progress which had been made, and with the increasing interest shown in the work. There appeared very evident signs of regret when no work of the kind had been done, and some excuse had to be given instead. The fact was, that very few of them anticipated this second invitation to the Castle, to report progress, and



they had imprudently put off commencing the work, until it was too late for the season. There was now abundant evidence given of the tide having turned, and the work being now fairly recognised as a duty—not to the labourers, but—to themselves. Many of those present had seen how much a farmer gained by securing strong, healthy, and willing labourers, and they had seen that these could be obtained by a certain course of procedure. This involved many duties which a farmer could not possibly carry out, and the necessity for female help had been proved. For those who were the wives of farmers, it resolved itself into an inquiry whether they would promote their husbands' interests, by doing that for the improvement of the labourer which he could not do. The object aimed at depended for success upon a series of conditions being supplied, and any omission would in many cases be fatal to success; at any rate, it would be an impediment in each and every instance. It is as when a load has to be removed, the man, horse, and cart, are of little use without the harness; and so also if there are only the man, cart, and harness at command, the work will not be progressed with.

Mrs. Woodford, who had become very deeply interested in this movement, placed all this very nicely before those who had accepted her invitation, and it was tolerably evident that she now led them to feel it, as a personal matter with each of them. There were twenty new cottages in progress on various farms, and in no case had Mr. Holmes consented to the outlay being made for new cottages, without satisfying himself that there was a good prospect of a successful issue being secured. This conference of the wives of the farmers had consequently



taken a more definite form than the first, and whilst Mrs. Woodford was delighted at the progress which had been made, there were many present who hoped to have another opportunity for showing that they also were ready to do their duty.

Another change upon the estate was now about to be made, for Mr. Holmes' father was desirous of giving up the Holt Farm, and a new tenant had to be chosen. He had for some months past had the assistance of one of his past pupils, who had taken the Rodney College diploma some years ago, and who was waiting for a nice farm. Evered Stevenson knew the Holt Farm thoroughly well, and arrangements were made for him to take the farm, with the stock and crops. Although, therefore, the tenant surrendered the farm under favourable conditions, yet it was a painful separation both for old Mr. Holmes and for his wife. Clustered around the Great Willow Tree, not ten miles from the Holt Farm, were many pleasing associations, and many fondly-cherished hopes, some of which had been already more than usually realised. But a time had come when both needed rest, and their son took care to help in rendering that rest as satisfactory as possible, by securing a suitable cottage residence and a few acres of land, within easy reach of Leaside.

CHAPTER XVI.

Encouraging a Love of Home—A Residence not a Home—Discovery of the Secret Cause—A Bachelor's Weighing Machine—A Serious Error in the Calculation—Two Bread-winners better than One—A valuable Friend—Compensation for the Past—Hand over Hand.

ONE of the most important results arising from the improved condition of the labourers on the Abbots Farm, was observable in the children, and in their love of their homes. Instead of returning from their school almost with a fear of getting into trouble, or at any rate with feelings of indifference, they went back to their homes as the centre of their little joys and pleasures. If there be a home in which the father and mother are cross and fault-finding, the boys stay there no longer than they are compelled, and the girls will do the same if they have the chance. But if they are encouraged to enjoy themselves, and amuse each other according to their different tastes, if smiles and sunshine take the place of angry reproof, they gather naturally towards their homes. Such was the result daily becoming more evident amongst these cottagers, for the children very generally found a kindly welcome awaiting their return. But why was their lot surrounded by more sunshine than that of others? Had they better

parents and kinder-hearted mothers? Under conditions which are far too general, it may be admitted that these would have been no better than others, but their exceptional circumstances made those parents happier in their homes, and placed them in the enjoyment of greater comfort and of better health. The conditions were favourable for contentment and comfort, and there was the satisfaction of an enjoyable rest when the labours of the day ended. Children do not need a home with costly fittings to attach them to it; to them it is enough to find in it parental affection and the means for amusement, and their attachment to it will then strengthen day by day. It was with a view to encourage this love of home, that a number of small prizes were offered by Janet for successful work in the children's gardens, and this indirectly increased their interest in the agricultural instruction they were now receiving in the Elementary Schools. But there were far higher and nobler objects than those to be attained, for a love of home is closely associated with affection for parents. A dutiful and loving child has a predisposition for properly discharging the duties of a later period of life, and with a kindly consideration and an affectionate regard for others. There is also a disposition to influence others in a similar direction, example and precept both inspire this condition of mind, which is peculiarly charming for all brought within its influence. If for a moment the contrast be observed between such families, and those brought up in misery and discontent, we soon see how much there is to be avoided with horror. The infant imbibes passion with its mother's milk, whilst the tottering child, seeking some proof of its father's love, is repelled with coarse and improper language, with which, as he grows older, he

learns to abuse his own comrades, and it may be his employers also. The one course leads the child through misery to become a discontented labourer, whilst the other encourages the nobler feelings of fidelity and affection.

But the love of home is often of peculiar growth, and its culture differs very greatly under varying circumstances. Evered Stevenson had not been settled into the Holt Farm for any great length of time, before he also began to realise the difference between a comfortable residence and a happy home. He was paying a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Holmes one evening, and the remark was very naturally made by the former,

"I hope you find yourself very comfortable in your farm."

"The farm is right enough," said Evered Stevenson, "and I am now familiar with it from end to end, but it is the house that bothers me, and I assure you if I had known what a change would have followed your father and mother leaving, I should not have taken the farm. As regular as the evening came, your father and I used to gather around the fire, and, with our pipes, we enjoyed many a pleasant and useful chat. Now, it is all different; solitude reigns in the evening, and domestic troubles throughout the day. An antiquated housekeeper and a very useful sort of servant girl ought to be able to do what little I want done; but they scold each other, and appeal to me to decide their differences. I never had to think about what I required for my meals, but now what little relish I may have had for my food is spoilt by the inquiry, which immediately follows, as to what I would like for the next feed, and so it goes on throughout the day. It will not do for me very long, I can see that."

"Your troubles may soon be rectified," said Mr. Holmes. "Have a better housekeeper, who will not trouble you about trifles; go out occasionally and see some of your neighbours; have some books to work at when you have nothing to do, and have a room fitted up for research. This is my prescription."

"Mr. Stevenson does not appear to think much of the proposed remedy, I fear," said Janet.

"It is not what I expected, that I readily admit," said Stevenson.

"Really," replied Janet.

"I fear I have not secured the sympathy I desired," said Stevenson.

"That I think is very probable," said Janet, "but possibly that is due to a reservation on your part of some of the principal facts. What advice did you expect to receive?"

"Well, then, truth to tell, Mr. Holmes," said Stevenson, "my establishment is very much like a gig with only one wheel, and I think I shall have to supply the deficiency before the machine will travel satisfactorily. Now, your prescription did not supply the missing wheel, and it is a difficulty which has yet to be overcome. If I could see my way to complete my establishment, I think I should soon go on right enough."

"According to that, the matter is pretty much in your own hands, and I shall hope soon to congratulate you," said Mr. Holmes, "for I should very much like to see you thoroughly well satisfied with the Holt Farm. It is a very useful farm, and I think you are likely to succeed with it, provided you can make your mind happy in your work. Who is the chosen lady?"

"There I am in a difficulty," said Stevenson, "but I think it will be one of those two young ladies who have lately left the Manor House Farm. Which do you recommend, Mrs. Holmes?"

"I could not think of making any such a recommendation," said Janet. "The first consideration for you to determine, is that personal preference which will justify you in asking her to share for life in your future lot, whether it be one of prosperity or of difficulty. You have no right to make such a choice without considering the interests of the one you seek to make your bride."

"In my opinion, the two girls are nearly equal," said Stevenson, "but one, I suppose, will have a little more money than the other."

"Do you mean that this money would make them quite equal?" asked Janet.

"Yes, I think the money restores the balance," said Stevenson.

"So long as you hold such views," said Janet, "I beg of you to avoid involving either of those girls in such a selfish and unworthy negotiation. Pardon me if I say that you approach the question in a money-hunting spirit, which is calculated to make your home far less enjoyable than the solitude of which you complain. If you have any feelings of regard for those girls, do not enter upon such an engagement in your present frame of mind."

"I quite agree in that advice," said Mr. Holmes. "I should be sorry to see you make a mistake, and you will do well to remember the advice given. I say this as a friend, and I am sure it is in the same spirit that my wife has spoken so plainly."

"I am excessively obliged to you and Mrs. Holmes,

for taking any notice at all of my difficulty, and I shall certainly consider with the greatest care what you say. I admit that the decided preference I entertained for Miss Trevor was balanced off by the money Miss Newbold is likely to have, but I had screened from myself the real truth of this secret compromise, and I acknowledge its unfairness."

"Depend upon it, Mr. Stevenson," said Janet, "that the highest and noblest qualification for marriage is a deep and sincere personal affection, and no question of settlement should ever supersede this in the slightest degree. When this exists, prudence must still be exercised, as regards a necessary and proper income, according to your station in society. Settlements, however, often furnish occasion for great differences, especially when the gentleman having regarded the income as available for general domestic expenditure, the wife considers the proceeds as only intended for the luxuries of life, instead of its actual necessities."

"Not long after this interview Stevenson again called at the Holt Cottage, for he had written to Marian Trevor, who, in her reply, gave a qualified assent, but she claimed an interval of at least a year, during which she might carry forward her medical studies, so that she would be able to utilise them subsequently as a means of support, should the necessity for it ever arise. She also stated in her letter, that she had seen so much anxiety arising from the fact of only one of a married couple being competent to act as a bread-winner, that she had long resolved to qualify herself before she thought of marriage.

"I call that very noble of her," said Stevenson. "What do you say, Mrs. Holmes?"

"I commend her for her good feeling and prudent resolution," said Janet. "She has no doubt seen the necessity for such a course of procedure, and she is evidently wise enough to adopt it."

"But how does this delay suit your very miserable condition of mind?" asked Mr. Holmes, laughingly.

"Oh, I am bound to wait," said Stevenson, "but how I shall get on I really do not know."

"You had better get one of the Rodney College men, who will be leaving next month. It will be something to occupy your evenings to have a pupil," said Mr. Holmes.

"You may also give my compliments to your house-keeper," said Janet, "and tell her that if she likes to walk up here on Tuesday next, I shall be pleased to show her some nice roses, for they are now in good bloom. I will give her a few hints."

Thus was Evered Stevenson reduced to a peaceful condition of mind, and his domestic comfort was greatly increased. On the following day the machinery in the estate workshop was to be inspected on its completion, and Mr. Thomas came over for the purpose of being present. The Squire and Mrs. Woodford were present, as also Mr. and Mrs. Holmes and some of the tenants, and amongst the latter the Ellis family of Birchwood were gathered in full strength. The works were finished and supposed to be in proper order, and Mr. Thomas's critical eye was actively observing the different portions of the machinery, even whilst engaged in general conversation. At last the moment arrived when the motive power was to be applied, and Mrs. Woodford was asked to pull a cord gently, for the purpose of putting all in

motion. It was done, with the happy result of a busy scene arising, for it had been previously arranged that some workmen should be ready at call, and no sooner was the cord pulled than the water flowed and the machinery began moving; the sawing of timber, the planing, the punching, and morticing of wood, and the making of bricks commenced in good earnest.

"Well, Mr. Ellis," said the Squire, "and what do you think of this improvement?"

"I scarcely know, sir, what to think about it," said Mr. Ellis. "I told Mr. Holmes once that if he could do what he thought of proposing to you, that he would be turning an enemy into a friend, but I never thought of seeing an enemy made into such a strong and useful friend. But, for the matter of that, the water was strong enough as an enemy, for no one would believe what I have lost through it during the last eighteen or nineteen years. I suppose we must let by-gones be by-gones, although, having had all the trouble, I would certainly like to have had some of its good service."

"I think you make out a very strong plea," said the Squire, "but you are in very safe hands whilst under Mr. Holmes' care."

"You would probably like to walk up the hill towards the Capstone Bog," said Mr. Holmes, "for you could then see how changed the Bog is, and how we have stored the water. This lower reservoir is proposed for the use of Birchwood Farm, and the upper one is for estate work. Thus I have not forgotten Mr. Ellis, and I will still bear him in mind as regards the application of this water. The Bog, you see, is quite dry, and it is very good turf for fuel, hence I hope Mrs. Woodford will do us the

favour of cutting the first turf, for it will be valuable as fuel for the labourers on the estate."

"I value very highly the kindly feeling which leads you, Mr. Holmes, to ask me to commence a work which will no doubt be of value to the labourers on the estate, but," said Mrs. Woodford, "there is no friend of theirs more entitled to do it than your wife, and I shall only be gratified by her assisting me in doing it."

Thus did Mrs. Woodford encourage a kind and active worker, and thereby she more fully endeared herself to the Tenants and Labourers on the estate. As they returned to the Castle, through Leaside, the Squire and Mrs. Woodford were pleased to see that the water which she had turned on for the machinery had been passed through the village, and was there made useful for the requirements of the people.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Invisible Enemy—Postal Delivery—The Tenants meet in consultation—A Good Adviser—The Danger to be Faced—The Safety Valve—The Yellow Flag—A Vigilance Committee—The Danger of Inspection.

THE month of June opened with some anxiety on Mr. Holmes' mind, for a messenger arrived from Mr. Archer's farm, which is on the extreme edge of the property, that foot and mouth disease had appeared on Mr. Greenway's farm, distant only one mile. Mr. Woodford had but recently left for the Continent, calling for a day with Mrs. Woodford, to leave their son with Dr. Forester. There was clearly a great necessity for action, for in a previous visitation the tenants lost heavily; hence, with the least possible delay, Mr. Holmes proceeded to the Archers' Farm, to learn full particulars of the facts of the case. It appeared that a lot of Dutch cattle had been purchased by a farmer residing at Upcot Grange, and thence the disease spread to Mr. Greenway's farm. Mr. Selkirk, who occupied an adjoining farm, soon had evidence in his valuable shorthorn herd, and the information had been brought by the postman.

"I am fearful," said Mr. Holmes, "that the postman has been an innocent agent in delivering something more

than the letters. Which is the course he takes before coming here?"

"Oh, he comes straight across from Upcot Grange to Mr. Selkirk's, passing Mr. Greenway's farm, right up to this place," said Mr. Brown, "and then he goes round towards Mr. Humphreys', of the Grange, and then back towards Wrexborough. I believe he comes through the very meadows in which the cattle are. However, here he comes, and he can answer for himself."

"Well, postman," said Mr. Holmes, "and what news do you bring this morning from Mr. Selkirk's, and along your delivery?"

"I am sorry to say, sir," said the postman, "things are awful bad, and that more beasts are taken with it. I went and had a good look at some of them as I came along both farms, and I can assure you that they are very hard hit with it. I guess we shall hear more of it in the neighbourhood. It is sure to take the line of the wind."

"No, postman, I think it is very much more likely to follow the track you take," said Mr. Holmes, "unless something is done to prevent it. You may take my word for it, that as you passed through those fields you got disease enough about your boots, to give it to all the cattle and sheep in the parish. I have not the slightest doubt, but that you took it from Upcot Grange both to Mr. Selkirk's farm, and to Mr. Greenway's. You would bring it here, and to all the farms you go to. So also your dog running by your side; he helps to spread the mischief. Now what are we to do with you both? Depend upon it, if the farmers round here knew what trouble and loss you and your dog are likely to bring upon them,

they would be disposed to serve you somewhat unpleasantly. Besides this, your own common sense ought to show you, that you are doing no end of mischief. What other letters have you now to deliver?"

"Not more than half-a-dozen, sir," said the postman, "but this means a walk of three miles over, and as far back again. I am sure I do not want to do any harm to any one. What can I do for the best, sir?"

"I will undertake the delivery of those letters for you," said Mr. Holmes, "and I will then see the postmaster at Wrexborough, and arrange about the future delivery. Now do mind one thing—keep to the path you came by, and do not forget that you have disease enough about you to poison a parish, and, for pity sake, keep it to yourself. I will hold you harmless for giving me these letters, and doing as I direct you."

The postman and his dog returned by the way they had come. Both understood there was something wrong, but there was no very great difference in the completeness of their knowledge.

"I am very glad," said Mr. Holmes, "that we have checked this probable spread of disease. Is there any right of way through here from those farms?"

"The path is allowed," said Mr. Brown, "more as a convenience amongst ourselves, but there is certainly no right of way."

"Now then for these letters," said Mr. Holmes. "I wish you would let your son ride over with two of these letters; I can manage the rest, and I will go on to Wrexborough without delay."

At an interview with the postmaster, Mr. Holmes arranged to provide a special messenger for the delivery of

all letters which endangered the spread of the disease on Holt Castle Estate. He also telegraphed to Dr. McAdam to come as soon as possible, and advise with the tenants upon the adoption of proper preventive measures, and he soon received a reply, fixing the time for his arrival. He reported to Mr. Woodford the steps he had taken, who promptly telegraphed his cordial approval, and he then returned to the estate offices to complete the arrangements. Notices were immediately sent off to the tenants, informing them of the danger which again threatened the estate, and inviting them to meet Dr. McAdam in Wrexborough shortly after his arrival. Permission was given for them to bring any neighbour or friend, provided their farms were free from the disease, and that they had not visited any farms suffering from the disease. The meeting was largely attended, and Dr. McAdam gave a very familiar description of the means to be adopted for protecting their farm stock, and for the cure of the disease.

"Gentlemen," said the Doctor, "I wish in a very few words to explain to you the best course to be adopted for the safety of your stock. To do so, I want you first of all to understand how very easily it is communicated from one animal to another. A person might handle a beast suffering from the foot and mouth disease, say by feeling the skin on the back, keeping away both from the head and feet; he may travel many miles away, and handle another bullock in the same way, and the disease shall appear in consequence. I cannot give you a better illustration of such a case than one named to me by the late Mr. Wm. McCombie, M.P., of Tillyfour. He told me that he had occasion to see a bull suffering from that disease, and he just handled him on the back. He went


home, and he only touched the first beast opposite the door in one of his own byres. In three days that bullock was seriously ill, and in two or three days more nearly every beast throughout the steading was down in it. A veterinary surgeon was called in to treat them, and he went on after seeing these cattle, to another farm six miles off, and in a few days every animal there had it also.

“You may have a stream running through a field in which cattle suffering from the disease are, and the water of that stream shall spread the disease along the course. You may have sheep suffering from this disease, say on a piece of turnips, rooks may pitch on the back of the sheep so affected, and fly away to another field, and thus convey the disease from the one place to the other. These, and many other circumstances, are calculated to spread the disease, besides walking upon the ground on which such cattle or sheep have trodden. Thus you see that any communication of beasts, birds, dogs, or men, with the cattle or sheep so affected may convey the disease elsewhere. I remember in one case, where the owner relied for safety upon his being able to prevent all communication going on with a farm on which the disease existed, and yet after every precaution the disease broke out. I was fortunate in finding out the cause. A young man living upon his farm, was in love with a maid-servant residing in the house on the forbidden farm, and he paid a visit to see the girl; but he brought the disease to his master's farm, and caused him very serious loss. I tell you of these facts, so that you may see the importance of perfect separation from all diseased animals, and that which they have used. On no condition should you permit any communication to be held with any farm

having the disease, but do not be content with this alone.

“In the next place remember that the fumes of sulphur are very purifying in their character. They help to protect from disease; they also help to destroy disease. If sulphur were one guinea an ounce, instead of one penny, it would be very much more valued. It matters not what may be the character of the infectious disease, drive the animals into a shed, sprinkle some sulphur upon hot charcoal or live coals, and let them breathe the fumes as long as you, or any man, can manage to stop in the shed. If you find the smoke so strong that you can stand it no longer, open the door and let yourself out, and then give the cattle or sheep the same chance of coming out, which they are tolerably sure to do. It is perfectly safe for animals so long as a man remains with them, for you make him a sort of safety-valve, and no danger can then arise, but do not do it without the man being with them.

“If in addition to this treatment you give the animals some salicylic acid in their water-trough—say sixty grains for each bullock, or twenty grains for each sheep, dissolved first in a little hot water—you will stand a very good chance of stopping this and similar infectious diseases. If you act with firmness you can ‘stamp out’ the evil; if you trifle with it, you do not know where the mischief will end. You may have cattle fattening, or it may be cows used for dairy purposes, which are attacked by the disease, and in the meat and milk you send away there may be matter which shall cause thrush and various other ailments to the human subject. I remember in my younger days, being determined to try the effect of some



milk which had been drawn from a cow thus affected, in a few days the disease manifested itself, and caused me a serious illness. I tell you all this, because 'to be forewarned is to be forearmed.' You may, if you will, crush your enemy, or you may so neglect prudent measures, that you not only lose much money, but what is still worse, you may scatter much disease around you.

"After I have inspected some of your farms, I will go to the nearest farm (Mr. Selkirk's), on which they have the disease, and after that I shall make myself scarce, until I have purified myself and my clothing, especially my boots. I will, however, give Mr. Selkirk every assistance in my power, so that I hope we shall get his stock free, and keep them free. I will ask him to fly a yellow flag so long as he has any case of disease. Now, gentlemen, you have the matter very much in your own hands, and I hope you may successfully resist this invisible enemy."

Before the tenants dispersed a "Vigilance Committee" was appointed, and thus they avoided the difficulty of "what is everybody's business being nobody's business." A vote of thanks to the Squire and Mr. Holmes for securing such good advice for them, and for this further evidence of their sympathy, was carried amidst an outburst of applause. After which their thanks were presented to Dr. McAdam for his valued help. The Vigilance Committee held their first meeting in the evening of the same day, at the estate offices, and a series of necessary measures were arranged for giving full effect to the advice which had been received.

"It strikes me, Mr. Holmes," said Mr. Brown, when the formal business had ended, "that it was very wise o

you to stop the postman and his dog yesterday. Your opinions quite agreed with what Dr. McAdam said, about spreading the disease from one farm to another."

"That case he gave of Mr. McCombie's stock," said Mr. Ellis, "and of the 'Vet' who was called to cure them, and then carried the disease to a farm six miles off, struck me as a strong warning for all of us. I must say it is a good plan of Mr. Holmes' to let us have the matter fully explained to us, and I am sure we all feel very much obliged to him for doing so. We can help ourselves now, and we know what we are about, without running the risk of having infection brought to us by those who favour us with a medical inspection."

CHAPTER XVIII

The Pocket Test—Guarding against a Surprise—The Cottagers grateful for Protection—Young Gardeners—Loss of Children—A Timely Caution—Compensation—Economy in Expenditure—A Word to the Wise.

At the next meeting of the Vigilance Committee, Mr. Holmes took advantage of a favourable opportunity, to convey to them some remarks made by Dr. McAdam, which the pressure of work at the previous meeting had prevented being then done. He said :—

“Dr. McAdam was anxious that you should be informed, that you may easily satisfy your minds as to the health of your stock, and as to the greater or less urgency for the treatment he recommended, by taking the temperature of the body by means of a small thermometer. These thermometers are specially constructed for the purpose, and are made so that they may be carried in the waistcoat pocket. I have had half a dozen down from the maker, so that I may present one to each of my fellow-workers on this Vigilance Committee. The temperature of a bullock or cow in health is about 100 degrees Fahr., and in the sheep it will be about $100\frac{1}{2}$ degrees. If the temperature rises two degrees, it is positive evidence

that caution is necessary; it indicates very suspicious circumstances. If the temperature rises four degrees, you may be sure there is active disease in the animal. If the thermometer indicates a rise of five degrees, be sure there is great danger. The thermometer may therefore be used as a means for showing the progress of disease, even whilst it is only becoming developed in the system.

"It is therefore very easy to get accurate information, and this will be found to be the earliest, and it will give the most reliable guidance. I think we are now all familiar with the treatment to be pursued. There must be a very watchful care that no communication shall take place with farms having the disease, and there appears to be nothing to fear in the use of the sulphur fumes or the salicylic acid, for if they are not actually necessary, they cannot possibly do any harm, if the directions given are properly carried out. I sincerely hope, that with your vigilant assistance we may hold the foe at a distance, and preserve the estate from its presence amongst us."

Thus did the agent and the tenants work together in the prevention of the disease reaching their property. It was perfectly natural, that a subject exciting so much attention should also be discussed in the families of the tenants, and also amongst the labourers. During one of Janet's visits to the cottagers on the Abbots Farm, Margaret Hutton told her that she had had a letter that morning from her daughter, who was apprenticed in Wyndham College, in which she spoke of several deaths of children in the "Homes on the Crescent." These children appeared to have been injured by the use of unwholesome milk, and they had orders in the College to boil all the milk they purchased before using it.

"It be a blessing to us, ma'am," said Margaret Hutton, "that the milk we get is so good. The cows be beautiful healthy, and we wish good luck to the Wigilance Committee, for I do hear they be keeping it away from us. It would be bad for us to have it among us. I know when it was about before—well, it was before I was married to Thomas—they had it here, and at Mr. Watkins' farm, and the calves and the lambs died terribly. Farmers got so 'fraid, that when they had anything in tidy condition like, that they thought would get it, they killed it before it got worse, as they said to save its life, but it really was to save its meat. We was poor in our home then, and we worked hard, but we couldn't go in for that meat. I suppose it went to those who didn't know the difference."

"But how long ago was this?" asked Janet.

"It was a matter of ten years or more," said Margaret Hutton, "and I used then to work sometimes for Mr. Watkins. But, do excuse me, ma'am, I saw Miss Clara, as used to be, driving past with her husband a few days back, and I went out, so she stopped to speak to me. She said she thought she recollected my face, and she said she was glad to see me so comfortable and happy. So I asked them if they would like to walk in, and they came in and looked about the cottage and the garden, and they said how nice it all looked. But, dear me, isn't she changed, too, from what I do recollect of her. Well there, ma'am, you did know her, even in your time."

"Yes, she is certainly very kind to all about her, and willing to help them," said Janet, "and, what is more, she knows how to do it."

"But see what she was, ma'am," said Margaret Hutton.

"So much the more to her credit," said Janet. "It

is more difficult to improve yourself, if you begin the wrong way and get into bad habits. I am very glad indeed to see how much she has improved. We must all try to improve day by day."

"Well, ma'am, that be just like you," said Margaret Hutton; "you will put in a good word for everybody."

"You know as well as I can tell you," said Janet, "that kind words cost very little, but they are often very precious and dear to all of us. And are your children going in for the Children's Garden Prizes?"


"Oh, yes, ma'am, that they be. You would smile to hear them talking over their garden work, and saying about what they learn now in the school. They talk about the food for their plants, and the food they eat, and how the plants be turning their food into food for us. Bless you, ma'am, it is strange what they do know, young as they are, and they be fond of their little pieces of garden."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Janet; "and I hope you will listen to what they have to say, for it will encourage them to remember and tell you much of that which they learn."

The conversation with Margaret Hutton naturally recurred to Janet's mind, during her evening conversation with her husband and her brother.

"Does not the order to boil the milk appear somewhat singular?" asked Janet.

"There is a very manifest reason for it," said Mr. Holmes, "for the influence of the high temperature would probably solidify the germs of the disease, and render them incapable of growth and development. It is very much the same as we destroy the vitality of an egg, by boiling it, and it is by no means improbable, that there is



a similar coagulation taking place in these minute germs of disease ? ”

“ I think it is a good thing for us on this estate,” said Charlie Webster, “ that we have had this little scare about the foot and mouth disease. You see we shall get into working order before we get the Texan fever over here, for I hear they are going to import Texan cattle. If they do so, we may prepare for something worse than the cattle plague. What we are doing will be like a preparatory drill. It will be useful as a preparation for a much harder fight.”

“ What is there specially objectionable in the Texan fever ? ” asked Mr. Holmes. “ I know it has been called a mysterious disease.”

“ When I was in the States I had the chance of seeing something of it in Missouri and Illinois,” said Charlie Webster, “ and I can assure you that it is enough to strike terror into any stockman’s heart. The Texan cattle appeared to become so naturalised to the influence of these germs of disease, that they take very little notice of it, and in any ordinary inspection they do not exhibit any sign of disease. Through the kindness of Dr. John Gamgee—whom I saw in Washington—much of the mystery was explained, for I learn that the thermometer always gives indication of too high a temperature of the body. These Texan cattle, although apparently healthy, have only got the disease more deeply secreted in them. As they are driven up country all seems right ; some cattle are sold here and some there, but when some five or six weeks have passed, and the people scarcely remember that a strange drove of cattle had passed, then the mischief shows itself. The cattle of the district thus visited suffer

fearfully, the temperature of their bodies quickly rushes up to 106 or 107 deg. (Fahr.), there is an intense thirst and pain, and they soon die. As soon as you hear of Texan cattle coming into our ports, prepare for a hard fight, for all our best breeds will be punished with intense severity."


"You are an alarmist," said Mr. Holmes. "If your views are correct surely the inspectors at the ports will stop it. They know what they are about."

"There lies the special danger we have to fear," said Charlie Webster. "It is because these fever-laden cattle show so little sign of the load they carry, that they are so likely to pass through the inspection as being sound, and in five or six weeks after look out for mischief."

"We can do nothing more than await the attack," said Mr. Holmes, "and be prepared for it, if it should come. But, turning to a more pleasant subject, have you seen what has been done at Birchwood Farm? You had better come up there to-morrow, for Mr. Thomas is going to start the new machinery. It is but small, but it will do a lot of work in the way of threshing and chaff-cutting, especially considering the power we had to spare. I think you will be pleased to talk the arrangement over with Mr. Thomas, for your mechanical tastes seem to continue as strong as ever, and you will find him rather a clever fellow. Bring Burch and Atherley, and call in and tell Stevenson also, as you go home to-night."

The machinery was started all right on the next morning, and Mr. Ellis was greatly pleased with the work done.

"I am commissioned by Mr. Woodford," said Mr. Holmes, "to tell you that this machinery has been fitted



up at the Squire's personal request, for he feels that as you have suffered so much in the past by the Capstone Bog, you should at least participate in the utilisation of the water, which has evidently been in its wrong place for many and many a by-gone year."

The Squire's kindness was duly acknowledged by Mr. Ellis, and they all went to see the work proceeding in the estate workshops.

"Another year, Mr. Ellis, I shall be able to build cottages on the estate at about 20 per cent. cheaper than it can now be done," said Mr. Holmes, "and I hope your new cottages will be the first to have the benefit of the change. All these doors, windows, stairs, &c., are for use next season, and they cost us fully 30 per cent. less than those we are now using. So also with the bricks; we shall have a large stock to distribute this winter. They are harder and sounder bricks than we can buy, and I hope, before this time twelvemonth, to see all this material in the shape of good cottages. But it is a pleasure to me, Mr. Ellis, to think that your old enemy is now so much under control, that we can make it work as and when we like, and that its energies will in future only be used in promoting the welfare of those upon the estate."

Mr. Stephenson then came up to Mr. Holmes to introduce his new pupil, Mr. Graham, who had just come from Rodney College, and had recently taken his Science Certificate with honours.

"How are you all progressing in the College?" asked Mr. Holmes. "Are you all working well, and are both students and professors satisfied with each other?"

"I am pleased to answer your questions in the affirmative," said George Graham. "The Principal said that

never in the history of the College, had better work been done than during the last year."

"We shall expect much from you, Mr. Graham ; you have a high reputation to maintain," said Mr. Holmes. "How is Charlie Robinson thriving ?"

"He is doing thoroughly well in the College, and promises exceedingly well as a lecturer. When I told him I was coming to Mr. Stevenson at the Holt Farm, he told me, and with much pleasure, the joke you had at his expense."

"It was not I who had the joke ; it was my father," said Mr. Holmes, "but I could not help thinking of him to-day in reading my copy of the *Agricultural Gazette* (No. 390), in which 'N. T.' asks in what form he can purchase the following articles the cheapest :—Calcic superphosphate, potassic nitrate, ammonia sulphate, calcic sulphate, potassic chloride, 80 per cent. The editor replies :—'The articles in question can be purchased under their English commercial names of superphosphate of lime, saltpetre, sulphate of ammonia, gypsum, muriate of potash, 80 per cent.' It is to be hoped that the young gentleman will in future be all the wiser for the reproof, for truly a little knowledge here becomes a dangerous thing—it places the pupil in a ridiculous position, in which he reflects a discredit on his teacher. It rather reminds us of a youth who, after visiting the continent for two or three weeks, cannot avoid the introduction of French into his general conversation, and occasionally speaks in broken English."

CHAPTER XIX.

Still on the Defensive—Successful Measures more generally adopted
—Rodney Club welcomes their Principal—Dr. Forester and the
Danger Signals—A Good Investment—A Village Club—The
Cross Keys—A Dinner at the Castle.

THE reports which Dr. Thomson had from time to time received through Professor Nicholson, of the strong colony of Rodney College men settled in the neighbourhood of Wrexborough, was a source of great pleasure to him, and it became an excellent preparation for an invitation—which was sent to him by the Wrexborough Rodney Club—to be present at their meeting, which was to take place early in the vacation. Much to their delight the invitation was accepted, and there was a general determination to make the reception worthy of the occasion. Charlie Webster was the President for the year, and it could scarcely have been in better hands, for he had secured the respect and esteem of his associates, both within the College walls and subsequently. Dr. Thomson also accepted the invite to the Abbots Farm, and arranged to become the guest of the President of the Club. This appeared to Janet to be an excellent opportunity for inviting Dr. Forester and his daughters to Holt Cottage,

and that invitation was also accepted. It then appeared desirable to learn how far it would meet Mr. Woodford's pleasure for the Leaside Club to be opened at that time, and it was ultimately decided that it should take place immediately after the meeting of the Rodney Club. The detailed arrangements were left to be settled in consultation with Mr. Holmes, with the understanding that Mr. and Mrs. Woodford would be at the Castle at that time.

The battle with the foot and mouth disease continued with great variation in success. So far as regarded Mr. Woodford's property, it was perfectly free from it; but the "Vigilance Committee" were constantly on the alert as against a common enemy. They had made Mr. Selkirk's farm their outer line of defence, and they had done so for two reasons. First of all, he was exceedingly anxious about his herd of shorthorns, which were very valuable animals; and secondly, because the committee found they could rely upon him to do everything that appeared right and reasonable. Fortunately it did not advance towards other parts of the estate, and precautionary measures alone were there adopted. Whether the character and condition of the soil were in any way instrumental in favouring the one line of approach was not satisfactorily determined, but this was the course it had taken on the previous occasion.

The freedom of the tenants on the Holt Castle estate, and their zealous help to Mr. Selkirk, were not long in attracting attention, so that it ultimately ended in like measures being adopted in the district actually suffering from the disease, and these were attended with steady success. In the month of August the measures which had been concerted in the district proved sufficient to


drive back all appearance of the disease. There was a general request made to the tenant of Upcot Grange, that he would in the future abstain from the purchase of foreign cattle, and there was a still more general regret that it should be possible for any man to be tempted to save £10 or £20 on a lot of cattle, at the risk of causing a loss of thousands of pounds in the district around him, and of the far greater danger arising from meat and milk being sold, which are, to say the least, in an unhealthy condition, even when they are not positively impregnated with the germs of disease.

The time at length arrived for the summer meeting of the Rodney Club, and a full gathering of its members took place in Wrexborough. The President (Charlie Webster) was supported by the Patron of the Club (Mr. Woodford) and by the invited guests, Dr. Thomson and Dr. Forester. The usual course of procedure was followed out, and an exceedingly important paper upon "Preventible Diseases in Farm Stock" was read by the President, after which a very interesting discussion took place. Dr. Thomson took part in that discussion, and after stating the great pleasure it gave him to meet such a body of old students associated in such thoroughly valuable work, he supported by a number of facts many of the views advanced by the President. He added:

"I have given much careful consideration to this subject for some years past, and I may say we have done our best in Rodney College to encourage preventive measures being adopted. Your own experience and observation will support me in reference to this fact. But there is no disguising this truth, that isolated individuals cannot possibly act with that good effect, nor, indeed,

with the same power, as officials duly authorised by the Government. It may be said that it is our duty to look after our own affairs, without relying upon Government support. With that view of the case I cannot agree. The rights of the nation claim protection, even when legislation for any special class may be fairly condemned. None of us have any adequate conception of the illness and suffering which is spread throughout the country by the use of food which is imperfectly matured, or which carries with it germs of disease in an undeveloped condition. As soon as these facts are more fully known, the duty of official control will be promptly admitted, and the result must be one of the greatest blessings conceivable to the health and prosperity of this country. Let me also say one word to encourage you in maintaining the opportunities you have established, for the interchange of your experiences and opinions. I need not tell you that the best men who leave Rodney College are those who go forth as humble seekers after more truth. Should one leave us with the idea that he is a very clever fellow, and that he will soon throw light upon the ignorance of farmers, he is certain to make a failure in his practice, and he is likely to bring contempt upon our College. I shall hope during my short stay in your neighbourhood to have an opportunity of seeing some of your farms, and observe some of those improvements which you have introduced into the farming of this district."

"I can assure you, gentlemen," said Dr. Forester, "that I have listened to the paper introduced by your President, and to the discussion which has followed, with the greatest satisfaction. There are two features of the case to which I think your attention may be more fully




directed in the future, and with considerable advantage. In the first place inform yourselves more fully upon that condition of the animal body, which steadily repels the attempts made by the germs of disease to establish themselves, and thus develop into active disease; and, in the second place, notice those natural conditions which favour the attacks made by these diseases. Every careful observer of vegetable growth, must have noticed that the varying conditions of soil and climate, determine the character of the surface growth. You will consequently find the conditions of soil and climate which favour or check the development of disease, have these powers also indicated by the surface growth they encourage. If an intelligent body of men like yourselves give attention to these two matters, you will soon contribute new and valuable information to agricultural science, and it will encourage others to work in the same direction. You will thus make the protection of your live stock more easy, and you will soon detect in the growth any 'danger signals' which may be in your herbage, and these will of course make you specially watchful and careful. Mr. Reginald Woodford, who is residing with me as a farm pupil, is working zealously in this direction, and I only hope when he returns you will be able to exchange views upon this subject, which I cannot but regard as of the greatest possible importance to your prosperity as farmers."

"You will readily understand," said Mr. Woodford, "why my attention has been so completely absorbed in the proceedings of this day. My own conviction has been very definite for some years past, that the Government Scholarships I established have been doing very excellent work. I have before stated to you, that this

is the best money I have ever expended on my estate. Our meeting to-day more than satisfies me of the magnitude of the work we have accomplished in a few years, and the remarks which have fallen from the Principal of Rodney College, and from Dr. Forester, fully confirm me in the opinions I hold. I can only say, 'Go on and prosper,' and I will still endeavour to do my duty in your midst."

The opening of the Leaside Club House had been fixed for the following afternoon, but early in the morning Charlie Webster drove Dr. Thomson for a long circuit amongst the farms occupied by Rodney College men. Dr. Forester and his daughters were taken by Janet to pay a visit to Wyndham College and the "Homes on the Crescent." Much as they had anticipated from the description which had been given, all of them were greatly surprised by the inspection. It raised a train of thought in the minds of these young ladies which was never lost, and Dr. Forester was equally pleased. Both of these institutions had now settled down into a regular course of work, the novelty had passed off in both cases, but a solid and substantial education, and much indirect comfort, was observable as arising from these valuable institutions. After luncheon they had an engagement to attend the opening of the Leaside Club House. This building consisted of a reading-room, supplied with newspapers, periodicals, maps hung upon the walls, and it was in every way convenient for quiet reading. A library had been commenced, and books could either be read in the room, or taken home for that purpose. On the other side of the entrance refreshments were supplied, and there was a comfortable smoke-room. It possessed all the con-



venience and comfort of the public-house, without its temptations to excess. Tea, coffee, and other light refreshments could be supplied in the reading-room, but no excisable drinks. In the rear of both of these rooms there was a larger room well suited for lectures, concerts, &c., and over all a set of rooms for the residence of the persons in charge. It was intended by the committee to arrange for a succession of lectures and concerts through the winter evenings, once every week. The management of the Club House had been entrusted to a committee consisting of nine persons, at a very nominal rent. Mr. Woodford had named three members of the committee, and the subscribers were to select six of their number at the end of the first month. The terms of admission were two shillings per quarter, or twopence weekly. The refreshments supplied were selected with due regard to their purity and quality, and they were also supplied at a rate very little over cost prices. Mr. Woodford arrived at the appointed hour, and with very little formality declared the Leaside Club House to be open for the use of subscribing members, residing in the immediate neighbourhood, and he added—"The objects we seek to attain are to give the members facilities for social intercourse, mutual improvement, and rational recreation."


Dr. Thomson then gave a short address on "The Advantages which may be gained by Village Clubs." After which an exceedingly nice concert was given, in which Mrs. Woodford, Mrs. Holmes, the Misses Forester, and others took part, the only regret expressed being that it had not been continued for a greater length of time.

The necessity for the Cross Keys Inn had now terminated, and the man placed in charge when the landlord

transferred the business, had now only to pass over the stock-in-trade to the Village Club. It was, therefore, with no small satisfaction that the house was at length finally closed, and Leaside set free from an influence which had sadly degraded the workmen who had resided in and around the place.

The pleasures of the day were completed by a dinner given to the Principal of Rodney College and Dr. Forester, at the Castle, at which no less than twenty members of Rodney College, residing in and around the estate, were present. Of the ladies present eight had passed through a College course of study, but there was an entire absence of all pedantic style, for rarely had a more enjoyable gathering taken place. There was a brightness and brilliancy in the conversation of the evening indicative of well-educated minds and cheerful spirits; and all were greatly pleased with the pleasures of the reception.

Dr. Thomson left Wrexborough on the following morning for London, greatly encouraged by the good fruit resulting from much anxious labour in Rodney College. Mr. and Mrs. Woodford left at the same time for Scotland. Dr. Forester and his daughters had arranged to lengthen their visit, and as there were some special matters on which Mr. Holmes had to consult with Dr. Forester, the ladies had full opportunity for visiting the cottages and informing themselves upon much which interested them in reference to the welfare of the poor. At length these also left for the south, greatly pleased with the many new friendships which had been established, and with a desire to extend throughout other districts some of those valuable arrangements which had come under their observation during their visit to the Holt Castle Estate.




CHAPTER XX.

Work, Sport, and Profit—Equitable Payments—The Inspector's Opinion—The Squire's Son and his Practical Experiments—The Coming of Age—A New Worker in the Joint Interests of the Landlord, Tenant, and Labourer.


No sooner had the harvest ended than a new scene began to reveal itself, for whilst the farmers were very actively engaged in their preparations for the crops of another year, their wives were commencing their weekly afternoon meetings for the wives of their labourers. With very few exceptions this was taking place throughout the estate, and the success of these gatherings was generally very satisfactory. Amongst the farms on which the work was for the first time commenced, we may mention the Manor House Farm, and no one entered upon the duty with more zeal than Clara Newbold. She followed, with prudent care, the original course of procedure adopted by Janet, chiefly because it had been put to the test, and had been found successful. At their first meeting, Clara said to the women :—

“It is but right that I should tell you why I have commenced these afternoon meetings for improving you in household work, and for teaching you something about making the home more comfortable, and the food better



and more useful. We have had a good example, as you all know, on the Abbotts Farm; you have heard what Mrs. Holmes did for the labourers' wives, and I feel that I cannot show her how highly I value her kindness to me, in any better way than by following in her footsteps. If I can help you to make your homes more healthy and comfortable, both you and your husbands will be more happy, your children will grow up to be a source of pleasure to you, and in after years they will be more highly valued by their employers. My reward will be to see that by your homes becoming more comfortable, your husbands will be made more valuable as workmen in consequence."

Thus did Clara Newbold enter upon a work making, it is true, many demands upon her time; but she did so in a confident belief that she would not be disappointed in reaping according to that which she had sown. In a few days Gertrude Newbold came to pay her a long visit, and she hoped to join in the hunting which was then about to commence. Her brother had never regained nerve for the sport since his accident, and had gradually settled down in the full enjoyment of his home. He was punctual and diligent in all his business duties, and his mind appeared to rejoice in a relief from an anxiety which had tested it very severely for several years. It was not from any selfish feeling that Clara did all in her power to render the happiness of that home as complete as possible, feeling assured that her husband's nervous energy would be again restored to its full perfection after a reasonable lapse of time. She did not persuade him to hunt, but at the same time she resolved that Gertrude should not be disappointed of the sport she loved so well. Early in




the season, therefore, Gertrude took her regular day with the hounds, attended by a groom, sent from London for that purpose by her father. The first day she went out with the hounds, she met Atherley and Burch, from whom she learnt that Charlie Webster had just sold his hunter for £350, and that he had gone northwards to purchase another one to train during the coming season.

The drainage of some of the farms was proceeding with more than usual activity, but with none the less careful oversight. The drain pipes made at the new works were of a very satisfactory character, and did not show those signs which indicate that early decay in the soil which has been too frequently observable. Herein Mr. Holmes felt additional satisfaction, for he did not approve of the idea of a large expenditure upon laying drains in land, which in one or two years would be stopped, either by accumulations in the lower portions of the badly laid drains, or by the crumbling away of some of the pipes. It was a poor satisfaction to speak of the land as having been drained, if the mischief arising from an excess of water still existed, for it really represented a loss of capital through want of care and judgment, and a burthen thrown upon the land without a proper advantage resulting therefrom. The same care which led him, as a tenant, to do all in his power to secure an efficient drainage to remunerate him for the annual payment he had undertaken, now led him to adopt prudent measures for the proper oversight of the work. He had, however, given the tenants an advantage he never had, for he paid them for horse labour in drawing the pipes, as he regarded this as one of the expenses fairly belonging to that cost of drainage on which the tenant had to pay interest.

Considerable interest was felt in the results of the school examinations which were now proceeding under her Majesty's Inspectors. Some months had now passed since the attempt had been commenced, to teach the Principles of Agriculture to the children in the Elementary Schools. It was evident that the subject had now been fairly introduced, and was in fact on its trial as to its suitability. There had been considerable doubt expressed before the work began, some thinking that schoolmasters had already too much to teach, others considering that the children had too much to learn, whilst a group of objectors were of opinion the instruction would spoil them for farm work. Each of these classes of opponents appeared to be indirectly instrumental in raising up advocates for this instruction being given. It was by these well-wishers to education, that the anxiety was felt. At length the report appeared, and in it her Majesty's Inspector stated : —“ Acting upon the authority granted under the recent alterations of the Education Code, the Principles of Agriculture have been introduced into five Elementary Schools in my district. I find that the children have made satisfactory progress in the subject, and it has had the effect of giving an additional interest to other branches of school work. It has not only proved to be an interesting change of thought, but it has made them understand, in some degree, the practical value of their education, a knowledge which very frequently comes when the time for school work has passed. But probably the most interesting result observable, is a feeling that Agriculture is a pursuit demanding intelligence, and therefore to be worked for rather than despised. The School at Leaside is certainly useful in enabling the

children to understand what is taught, instead of repeating in a mechanical manner the words they have learnt. The work which has already been accomplished, encourages a confident expectation that in the future, the instruction in the Principles of Agriculture will become increasingly valuable."

This was not the only pleasing report upon Education, which came under Mr. Holmes' observation, for he received a long letter from Reginald Woodford giving particulars of some work in which he had been engaged under Dr. Forester. He appeared to be particularly interested in the utilisation of electric power, which was receiving careful consideration from Sydney Forester, who had but recently returned from his course of study in one of the German Universities. Reginald Woodford saw enough of the unlimited means at command for securing not only motive power, but an increased vegetable growth, and this stimulated his thirst for a fuller knowledge of the subject. Without discouraging that enthusiasm which has so often led to great discoveries in the past, Dr. Forester prudently tempered it down, by showing the immense importance of first understanding the facts which are taking place around us under the existing state of things. It was no wonder, then, that Reginald Woodford had become intensely interested in the work which was proceeding upon the farm, and was personally convinced that in the proper utilisation of electric power, there was much to be done for the future of farming. He also told Mr. Holmes of an experiment he had been carrying out with some fattening bullocks. The "roots" which had been sent to the homestead for the cattle he separated into two lots, according as they floated or sank in a water-trough filled with



The man in charge of the cattle was willing to use the two lots just as Reginald Woodford had sorted them, for to him it appeared a very harmless sort of diversion on the part of the young gentleman. Three bullocks had been fed with the floating roots, and nine had been fed with those which sank in the water. This mode of feeding had proceeded for about two weeks, when Dr. Forester asked his cattle-man what was the matter with this lot of three bullocks!

"Oh," said he, "nothing at all as far as I know, except that Mr. Reginald has sorted the roots out for me a bit."


"How has the sorting been done?" asked Dr. Forester.

"Simply," said Reginald Woodford, "on the plan you spoke of to me of testing the value of our root crops by their floating power."

"Anyhow, your experiment has shown you the tremendous difference in their feeding power," said Dr. Forester. "You had better be cautious, George Cheney, of letting anybody sort your roots again for you. These young fellows will be experimenting on you some day if you do not mind."

"I shall be on the look-out for 'em," said Cheney. "They caught us all this morning at our breakfast, and said they had a new dancing machine. It were a pretty little box enough, and so we joined hands as they told us, but we soon began to dance and to holloa, for I never felt the like before. They called it 'lectric energy; but they got away pretty quick, and lucky too. Perhaps they suddenly thought of their own breakfasts."

The coming of age of the young Squire was certain to be well observed at Holt Castle, and Reginald Woodford



consequently returned home to spend Christmas, and his approaching birthday. It was a day long to be remembered by all on the estate. Two very large wooden sheds had been constructed immediately adjoining the Castle, but their neat and pretty decoration was likely to lead any one to imagine, that they were parts of the main building. In these nearly the whole body of labourers, and their wives and children, were entertained at a dinner, and they were waited upon by the wives and daughters of the tenants. Mrs. Woodford and her daughter were most active in their attentions to their comforts. It was a most enjoyable gathering; the health of the young Squire was drank with much enthusiasm, and his thanks were cordially given to them for doing so.

On the following day the tenants and their families were entertained to dinner in one of the new apartments, the other being reserved for a ball-room for their subsequent amusement. The health of Reginald Woodford was here more formally proposed by the oldest tenant, and it met with the warm reception which the time and circumstances demanded. In responding to it, he said:—

“I must ask you to receive my very sincere thanks for drinking my health with so much warmth and kindness. I hope when I come to be more amongst you we shall be true friends to each other. It has been said that I am learning farming, and that is very true, for as my father told me from the first, ‘If I would fully understand a farmer’s troubles and difficulties, I can only learn these by personal - contact with them.’ This I believe to be perfectly true, and I am exceedingly glad that I am giving time and attention to it. I dare say some of you will smile when I say that I hope to go in for the study of

agricultural science, and especially electricity, and I shall do so because in future years it may come into use upon very many of our farms. Many of you will remember that there was a time—at any rate, I have been told so—when persons laughed at the possibility of steam being useful upon our farms, but no one laughs at the idea now. So, I do not doubt, there are very few gatherings of farmers, in which the man who expressed his belief in the value of electricity for the cultivation of the soil, would not be met with ridicule. That feeling of ridicule I am ready to meet, and I do so because I am convinced of its important influence on the future of agriculture, and upon the welfare of the future tenants of this estate. I only regret that it is arranged for me to go to Oxford for the next three years, for I would much rather study science in our best schools without any interruption whatever. Again let me thank you for your kindness, and I sincerely wish you and yours, health, wealth, and happiness.”

The health of the Squire, coupled with that of Mrs. and Miss Woodford, brought the celebration of Reginald's birthday to a happy termination.

CHAPTER XXI.


A Neglected Property—False Economy—An Impediment Removed
—Birds of a Feather, Nesting—The Local Education Committee, having secured Good Results, extend the Good Work.

THE improvement of the Wyckham estate having been decided upon, it was considered desirable that some responsible person should be stationed upon the property to watch over the progress of the work. The choice fell upon Mr. Atherley, one of the pupils on the Abbotts Farm, for he had long been brought under Mr. Holmes' notice by reason of his steady application to the work on the farm, and, in fact, on the estate generally. Mr. Holmes was far too good a general to leave an inexperienced commander in full charge of the improvements, without securing for him a thoroughly reliable helper, and for this position Donald Macpherson was selected. For some years he had discharged the duties of a working bailiff on the Abbotts Farm, and he had in a quiet and unobtrusive manner accomplished much good work amongst those employed in its cultivation. The feelings of jealousy, which were entertained when first he came to the farm from the far north, had long since been

displaced by a kindly esteem, arising from many a friendly act. The farm apprentices who had resided under his care, had found the greatest advantage from the prudent counsels given by Donald and his wife. They were now about to leave for the south, but they left behind them some very distinct evidences of duties faithfully discharged.

The Wyckham estate consisted of about 2,000 acres situated around the small town of Churminster, and it was let out in a large number of small tenancies. The occupants were, generally speaking, hard-working men, who laboured more industriously than any of the very few persons they employed on the land. Neither prosperous times, nor seasons of depression, appeared to have much influence upon them, for the rule of life appeared to be, "Avoid spending money." Few workmen lived upon a coarser fare, and none equalled them in their long and weary labours. They laboured both early and late; no one could reproach them for any waste of money; they were generally ready to pay their rents as they became due; and thus life was to them and their families, a weary continuance of labour. It is easy to imagine the condition of the land, the fences, and the houses, for the landlord's agent had considered his duty ended when he had drawn their rents from them. It is no wonder then, that when Mr. Holmes and Dr. Forester inspected the property they found it in a thoroughly "waste" condition.

The general scheme for the improvement of the estate had been determined upon, but it is generally a matter of difficulty to know where to commence operations when everything is wrong. With jealous care did Mr. Holmes




regard the life-long ties which bound the tenants to their native spots, and avoided any reckless interference even with these mere local attachments. In this instance, as in thousands of other cases, the man who shows most consideration for the feelings of others, is seldom placed in a condition of difficulty thereby. Something or other is sure to happen which favours the work being accomplished, without causing the injury he may have dreaded. The departure of Mr. Atherley had been rather hastened, by reason of the tenant of the Churl Mills asking to be released from his occupation, as he had taken the steam mills at Yoxton. This placed the mill and about 150 acres of meadow land at Mr. Holmes' immediate disposal, on which the improvements might be forthwith commenced.

The Churl was naturally one of those shallow streams, broken here and there by rough shingle, which are capable of meeting the requirements of the fisherman, rather than the necessities of him who seeks water-power for working a corn mill. In order that the mill-power should be supplied, the water had to be ponded back and stored. The mill was very old, and no one knew from personal observation, how far the meadow land on both sides of the stream, had been altered by the free passage of the water being prevented. But the well-trained eye of the agricultural botanist, can read the changes as accurately as if they had been recorded in a book. It had formed the subject of comment when Mr. Holmes and Dr. Forester walked over the land. Here were meadow weeds and coarse aquatic grasses flourishing in luxuriance, whilst good quality grasses, capable of yielding rich and valuable food, were almost exterminated. V

by any chance a specimen of good grass were found, it had become so altered in appearance under the unfavourable conditions to which it had been so long exposed, that it required a critical eye to recognise it in its deplorable and dwarfed condition. Thus the preservation of the water of the Churl for grinding purposes, had practically destroyed much of the good herbage, which once flourished in the valley through which it passed.

This was not the only damage which was observable along the river's course, for much of the land, which was not influenced by the storage of the water, was damaged by the overflow of the stream, particularly after heavy rainfall. The first step in the improvements which had been decided upon was the removal of the old mill, so that the river might be allowed to flow in its natural channel, unchecked by any ponding up of its waters. This work was commenced as soon as possible after Mr. Atherley and his helpers had established themselves comfortably into the residence at Churl Mill.

Bill Moore, who had been "out of his time" for rather more than a year, had continued to board with Donald Macpherson, even after he had been engaged by Mr. Webster to take charge of a pair of horses on the Abbotts Farm. He was not the only one whose "time" had expired, for Mary Hutton's indenture had been returned to her some few months previously, endorsed with an excellent character, and she had since then continued in service at Wyndham College. Edward Gower, the second apprentice at the Abbotts Farm, was also free of his indenture, and was now employed by Mr. Ellis on the Birchwood Farm. During the Christmas vacation of Wyndham College, Mary Hutton had spent a week




at her mother's cottage, and she was present at the festivities given at the Castle on the young Squire coming of age. What was more natural than that the successful results of her apprenticeship should be talked of by her mother and her neighbours, and besides this the fact of her having rather more than £30 in the bank, made her quite an heiress amongst other girls of the same age, who were practically penniless. No one knew of these facts more fully than Janet, for Mary Hutton had called upon her, and received a few words of friendly counsel bearing upon her future career, now that she had again become a free agent. Nor must it be for a moment supposed, that Bill Moore had been overlooked by the same kind friend. On the other hand, the fulfilment of his original determination to prevent his father and mother ending their days in the Union, had been a subject of conversation between them on several occasions, and a tolerably definite course of procedure had been arrived at.

"If you are to accomplish this praiseworthy object," said Janet, in one of her conversations, "you must take care that when you marry, you get a true helpmeet, and not one who will be careless about your wages. See some distinct proof of careful and prudent habits in the girl you select for your wife, and this will be a good promise for the future."

No one felt any surprise when they heard that Bill Moore and Mary Hutton were "engaged," and scarcely had three months passed away before Donald Macpherson had to give up his cottage, and proceed southwards on his new duty. But it was not every labourer who could follow Donald Macpherson satisfactorily, for in addition to one acre of garden land, which he had thoroughly well

cultivated, he had also three acres of grass land, two cows, and some pigs, with various preparatory tillages, &c. It was evident that Bill Moore could easily take a transfer of the tenancy, and also purchase Donald Macpherson's furniture and stock ; and after Mary Hutton had inspected her new home this was arranged to be so done. Here, then, Janet saw a happy completion of the apprenticeship system, resulting in a well-trained and contented labourer and a prudent wife, entering, at the very threshold of life, upon a happy home, with the well-earned fruits of patient industry.


The Wrexborough Chamber of Agriculture had its attention again drawn to the question of instruction in agricultural science, by another report from the Education Committee. It was shown therein, that the help of the Endowed Grammar Schools of their district had at length been satisfactorily secured. The early efforts of the Education Committee had been very differently received by the governors of these schools, for, whilst all acknowledged that instruction in science was a legitimate portion of school work, very different views were entertained as to the means whereby it should be carried out. For instance, in one Grammar School, a Science Master was appointed for teaching Chemistry, Vegetable and Animal Physiology, and the Principles of Agriculture. A salary of £80 a year was at first given for two hours' work on four days in each scholastic week, but this was subsequently increased to £100 a year. In this case a master who had qualified under the Government Department of Science was chosen, and he was encouraged to take other science classes, in addition to the work done for the Grammar School. The advantages of this system soon became



very evident, for he secured classes in other schools, and he also had evening classes open to the general public.


So far had this example proved to be the most satisfactory, that it had been followed in the other three Grammar Schools of the district. The consequence was that this perfectly legitimate use of the School endowments, secured most useful training in science for the boys educated in these Schools, and at the same time many others were enabled to take advantage of the instruction given by properly qualified Science teachers. Previous to the time of the Education Committee taking action in the matter, the education of the boys was most imperfect, and the sons of the tenant farmers were withdrawn from school very early, chiefly because there was little more to be taught in the school, which had any useful influence upon the practical duties of life. After the introduction of Science instruction, it was found that the average length of attendance was increased by rather more than one year, clearly showing an appreciation of the opportunities for Science instruction which had been secured.

The Education Committee also reported that "as they had secured the objects for which they were originally appointed, their duties had naturally terminated, but it was evident that still greater advantages were attainable, if the Chamber considered it desirable to renew their appointment." If good work, well performed, ever justified the confidence of the Wrexborough Chamber of Agriculture in placing confidence in a committee, it certainly did so in the present instance, and such was the unanimous opinion of the members who were present.



A vote of thanks for the past services of the Education Committee was immediately passed, coupled with a request "that they would kindly continue a work, which had already resulted in such marked advantages to the agricultural interests of that district."


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CHAPTER XXII.

A Veteran seeks Rest—Early Associations are Revived—Shielding the Tenant—An Absentee Landlord—An Agent Taking Care of No. 1—Self-condemned, and Retires upon his Property—A More Worthy Successor—An Additional Helper.

THE return of General Robert Wyndham from India, on his retirement from the army, naturally occasioned his sister much pleasure, and Mrs. Woodford made every preparation for giving him a suitable welcome at Holt Castle, after his lengthened absence from England. It was during the hot weather of an unusually warm June that he arrived at the Castle, and everything was done to make the day of his return one of special festivity. The predominating desire of his mind was rest—pure, undisturbed, and genuine rest—and for many days he considered it the greatest kindness for that desire to be gratified, and he rejoiced in it to his heart's content. At length his interest in domestic news revived, and this opened up a rich store of information for him. When correspondents have been fairly active, much must always remain for personal report, but in the present case, neither Mrs. Woodford nor he were much disposed towards letter-writing. The incidents of the fire at the Castle were



clearly narrated, and the courageous conduct of Holmes and Webster was put before him, but he was intensely interested to know that Charlie Webster was the son of his old commanding officer, and that he was then the tenant of a farm on the Holt Castle Estate. An early call was shortly decided upon, and Mrs. Woodford drove her brother to the Abbotts Farm to call upon Charlie Webster. As they approached the house he rode up from the opposite direction, and was just ready to receive them on their arrival.

"I scarcely need an introduction to you," said General Wyndham, "for you are such an exact likeness of your father, as I remember him in his younger days, that it seems to me as if I were speaking to an old and dear friend. However, I am delighted to make your acquaintance."

The kindly feeling having been acknowledged, they all entered the dining-room. Over the sideboard hung the V. C. picture, on which the scene was so well portrayed, by which Col. Horace Webster gained the Victoria Cross for saving the life of General Wyndham, when he was serving under him as a Lieutenant. For a moment or two a perfect silence reigned, but it was at length broken by Mrs. Woodford saying:

"I had no idea, Mr. Webster, that you had this picture here, or I should have asked to have seen it before. If that is a faithful picture, Robert, you must have been in extreme danger."

"No exaggeration whatever about it," said the General, "these are fearfully dangerous moments, and no man better deserved the Victoria Cross than my dear old friend Col. Webster. But what are you doing here, Mr.

Webster, and how came you to the Holt Castle Estate? You ought to have entered the army."

"I am living a very happy and an easy life," said Charlie Webster, "vegetating perhaps, some would think, rather than anything else, but I have a very nice farm, and I help my brother-in-law in many matters in which we have a common interest. Thus there is scarcely a day passes but some little matter of duty falls to my lot, outside the regular work of the farm, and the care of my pupils. I have only just returned from a committee meeting at Wrexborough, as there is a desire to organise throughout the district occupied by our local Chamber of Agriculture, a similar arrangement to that which protected this estate from the foot-and-mouth disease recently."

"What an excellent idea," said the General. "Were you successful in preventing loss on this estate?"

"My brother-in-law, who is the agent of this estate, was able to do so, and we all gave him our best help."

"I wish something of the kind had been done upon my Cheshire property," said the General, "the loss which has been suffered there is enormous. And now as to your mother, and the other members of your family."

It is unnecessary to follow out the minor incidents of this interview, but ere it closed the General promised himself the treat of coming again to the Abbots Farm to talk over some of the many incidents which were so closely connected with Col. Webster and himself, and this promise he repeatedly performed. To him it gradually became more like the renewal of the friendship of his early life, and the feeling of attachment and devotion to the father, was in some degree re-established in the son. Thus did the General, day by day, become more fully

acquainted with the Holt Castle Estate, and its various improvements, but from no one did he care to receive his information so much as from Charlie Webster. In this way he became familiarised with all that had been carried out for the improvement of the tenants and the labourers, as well as for the advancement of the landlord's interest. The General extended his stay at Holt Castle, for a greater length of time than Mr. and Mrs. Woodford had ever ventured to hope for. At length he felt compelled to visit his property in Cheshire. Before leaving the Castle he informed Mrs. Woodford, that he thought it desirable to let her know his intentions as to the disposal of his property.

"These estates, you know," said he, "are mine, subject only to your settlement. Practically they are ours. I have no intention of departing from my bachelor condition, to which I have now become thoroughly habituated. I shall therefore secure the Cheshire property for my niece, for your son will be well provided for from his father's property. I am now going to visit it after many years absence, and in my arrangements I shall henceforward have regard to this ultimate disposal of my property. In fact, if Florence marries satisfactorily, I shall be quite prepared to anticipate in some degree these intentions, by giving her an earlier interest in the property."

Although this disposal of the Cheshire property had been hoped for, and in some degree calculated upon, it was still very satisfactory to find the expectations so completely realised. General Wyndham shortly left for Cheshire to have another look at his property, but nothing was known of his approaching visit. The estate had

certainly suffered by reason of its having a non-resident landlord, but although this was unavoidable on his part, it was none the less injurious to the property. The more he went over the various farms, and associated amongst his tenantry, the more did he appear to be almost an intruder. They had gradually become accustomed to look upon Mr. Shelstone, the resident agent, as their lord and master. In fact, when the General happened to be accompanied by his agent, the almost reverential salutation which Mr. Shelstone received, showed how fully the people on the estate recognised his power over them, for good or for evil. Coming as the General had done, from an estate where all were fellow-workers in one common cause, and where everything was in good order, it very naturally made the contrast all the more striking to him.

"Well, Shelstone, and how do you consider the tenants are doing on the estate generally?" asked the General.


"Badly, sir; in fact, I may say very badly, for the times are bad, markets are low, and stock has suffered sadly. We had no choice but to lower the rents accordingly, and hope for better times for them and for us."

"This is a bad report," said the General, "and the appearance of the estate only shows how correct your views are."

"Ah, sir, things are even worse than they look, I can assure you, and they will be worse before they are better."

"There is certainly no need for that," said the General, "and in fact this must not be. But what has been done to assist these good fellows under all their troubles?"

"You see, sir," said Mr. Shelstone, "there is really very little one can do for them. There are three causes



for their difficulties. Bad seasons, bad markets, and discontented labourers. How can the tenants stand against these? I pity them from my heart, that I do."

"You have omitted two other causes of loss and difficulty," said the General. "Agents who are not useful to them, and landlords who seldom inspect their property."


"I hope, sir, you do not think I have neglected your property during your absence."

"On that I express no opinion," said the General, "but it is evident to me from your own statement, that you have not rendered the tenants any assistance in their troubles, except the very easy plan of making an allowance off the rent. But possibly you have condemned yourself too soon. Consider, then, and then tell me if you can, what effort has been made to assist them under all their difficulties."

"I have been easy with them as to the payment of their rents," said Mr. Shelstone, "and I have not pressed them for repairs, nor as to their management or cropping, and I have looked well to the estate generally."

"Your worst enemy," said the General, "could scarcely have done you a greater discredit than you have done yourself, or shown more clearly that on this estate the agent is the only one who has flourished amidst the general struggle against adverse circumstances."

There was but one issue out of this unfortunate position of affairs, and the General, with characteristic promptness, determined to correct these irregularities. Not long after this conversation an invitation was received by Charlie Webster to pay General Wyndham a short visit. He was staying at an hotel in a neighbouring town, as



the residence on the estate was unfurnished, and only occupied by a care-taker. They drove over much of the property together, and the result of their consultation was a pressing offer from the General, that Charlie Webster should take the management of the property with as little delay as possible. He returned at once to the Abbots Farm to endeavour to make the necessary arrangements, and in a few days he was able to accept this responsible trust, with the very handsome remuneration which the General had attached to it. Subsequently arrangements were made for Mr. Shelstone's retirement, and he ultimately settled down upon a nice little property which he had recently purchased.

"I should very much like to know from you, Charlie," said Janet, "how you are going to raise the character of the labourers on the Chesterton Towers property, without woman's help. As a bachelor, having a sister near you, there has been little difficulty here. You will now have a much wider sphere of duty, and you will be entirely thrown on your own resources. I am, however, exceedingly pleased that, with your kind help, I have seen the labourers on the Abbots Farm, thoroughly well settled into a prosperous and contented condition. The novelty of their position has worn off, and I hope that whoever may succeed you as tenant, their interests are safe. But I should like to know what you think of doing to meet your difficulty."


"I never took this view of the affair," said Charlie. "I fully admit that it is a two-handed piece of work, and that I do not see my way to get any one to share it."

"Still you have undertaken the duty," said Janet, "and you are not the one to allow any portion to be

neglected. I suppose you have formed some definite attachment, although nothing has been said to me on the subject."

"I cannot say that I have," said Charlie, "for I love them all so well, that it is very hard to choose; and then again, so many of them are such terrible flirts, and I shall certainly not have one of these."

"I am afraid, Charlie, you are one of those who, having rather encouraged flirtations, subsequently condemn the flirts, and although this is scarcely fair, still I know you will require an able, intelligent, and an affectionate wife, if she is to come up to your standard of perfection. Depend upon it, the sooner you make up your mind upon the point, the better for yourself, and also for the General's property."




CHAPTER XXIII.

A Good Tenant Protected—The Squire's Son becomes a Tenant Farmer—An Adieu to a Favourite—Our Grammar Schools Utilised—A New Scholar for Rodney College—Selecting a Deputy.

ONE of the first proofs which Mr. Holmes had, that it was known that his brother-in-law was about to leave the Abbotts Farm, was an application being made for that farm by William Ellis, the son of the tenant occupying Birchwood Farm. That he was a thoroughly skilful farmer there was no doubt, and he had much to commend him to Mr. Holmes for his selection for this position. The question of capital naturally arose, and it appeared upon careful calculation that William Ellis, even with such help as his father could render him from his own farm, had scarcely capital enough to work the land advantageously. The difficulties of working with insufficient capital were clearly seen by Mr. Holmes, and he was therefore compelled to inform William Ellis, that he could not recommend him as the tenant for the Abbotts Farm. He felt that he would not only be buying and selling everything on unfavourable terms, and have all the

difficulties of a tenant who has not enough capital for his land, but there was also a very great danger of bringing his father into the same position. His opinion was, that it was better to have too little land rather than too much, and that economic management of a small occupation, was more advantageous than having more land than the capital at command enabled the tenant to work thoroughly well. It was a great disappointment to both, but Mr. Holmes had a responsible duty which he was bound to discharge faithfully, and with due regard to the interests of landlord and tenant. After a day or two, William Ellis called again, for the Wrexborough Bank had consented to make an advance of cash which would meet the deficiency. The decision given, however, could not be reversed, and William Ellis, with much regret, had to give up all hope of the farm.

Numerous applications awaited examination, but their consideration was suddenly suspended by a letter from the Young Squire, expressing his wish for the farm to be retained for him. He also wrote to his father explaining his reasons more fully in detail. The time was now approaching when he would leave Dr. Forester, and prepare for his Oxford course. He consented to go to the University as had been arranged, but he wished to keep his terms with the least possible absence from the estate. If therefore he became the tenant of the Abbotts Farm, and had the assistance of a thoroughly good farmer to carry forward its management, his association with agriculture would continue to grow, even whilst he was undergoing the pre-determined University career. Mr. Woodford was gratified to find so much enthusiasm displayed by his son, and after consulting with Mr. Holmes,



the request was granted by the Abbotts Farm being reserved for Reginald Woodford.


The arrangement for a valuation of the stock, crop, and tillages of the outgoing tenant was easily concluded, and the work of the farm proceeded without any interruption. The selection of the most competent and suitable person for carrying on the management of the farm, was soon brought under Mr. Holmes' consideration by a letter of request from Reginald Woodford. In it he pointed out that he should not wish to reside at the Abbotts, although a room would have to be reserved for his special use. It therefore became necessary to have a farm manager who would occupy the house in a satisfactory manner, and he also thought that the person so selected ought to be able to assist him in his agricultural research. Here, then, there was an opportunity for William Ellis, which Mr. Holmes hoped might be made equally as convenient to him as if he had been the tenant, and certainly with much less anxiety than having to provide interest upon borrowed capital. The arrangement which Mr. Holmes proposed to the young Squire, and which was finally approved of, was as follows: The farm manager was to have the residence at the Abbotts for his own occupation, with the reservation of one sitting-room; an ordinary bailiff's salary to be paid to him, which sum should be charged as a part of the working expenses of the farm, whilst a sum equal to any profits remaining, after payment of five per cent. on the capital, should be paid to the manager as an additional remuneration. On these terms William Ellis took charge of the duties, and soon furnished the residence for his own occupation.

It is a curious fact that when young men situated

as William Ellis was, desire to have a farm for personal occupation, there is frequently some undeclared reason which stimulates them to such a course of procedure. Unlike the previous tenant of the farm, he had a very definite attachment; but it was one of which he had hesitated to make any mention, but he was still exceedingly anxious to secure a home, to which he hoped he might bring the lady of his choice.

The young Squire had specially arranged that the room at the Abbots which had been so long devoted to agricultural research, should be left by Charlie Webster in full working order. William Ellis was quite prepared to make a good use of it, for as a student at Rodney College, he had undergone a regular course of instruction in laboratory work. He would now have a very unusual opportunity for employing these various appliances, for throwing additional information upon the results and products of the various field experiments, which might be carried out upon the farm.

The departure of Charlie Webster to a more important sphere of duty, was at once a cause for sincere regret and for hearty congratulation. It involved a personal sacrifice to lose his association, but it was in some degree compensated for, by the fact that he had gained a position for which his business experiences, and his rectitude of mind, were the best qualifications. He carried with him the hearty good wishes of those with whom he had been brought into contact, and his absence left a void not easily filled. Happily for those most nearly connected with him, the facilities for railway transit were exceedingly good, and these had already been discussed by Janet and Mr. Holmes, and were considered favourable




for the occasional interchange of visits. The Squire and Mrs. Woodford took care not to allow Charlie Webster to leave the Abbots Farm, without most warmly congratulating him upon his appointment, and wishing him every success in the discharge of the duties devolving upon him.

One of the last public duties which Charlie Webster discharged, before he left the neighbourhood of Wrexborough, was to attend a meeting of the Education Committee, and support the extended work which it had been decided to recommend to their Chamber of Agriculture. It was the opinion of the Education Committee "that the advantages they had gained in their own district—resulting in Grammar School endowments of over £2,000 per annum, being made in a large degree useful in extending instruction in the Principles of Agriculture, should be reported in detail to the Central Chamber of Agriculture, so that other local Chambers might follow their example." In this way it was anticipated that great advantages would result, by blending good middle-class school education with tuition in Agricultural Science. It was also thought "desirable to secure Government assistance for facilitating a higher-class Education in the Principles of Agriculture at some central spot in this kingdom, so that the tenants might have the very best training in the Sciences connected with Agriculture, and at a cost which should be quite within their command." This certainly appeared a reasonable request, for whilst on the one hand various "Chairs" were endowed by Government, to establish very superior educational opportunities, these also were beyond the reach of the agriculturists. Thus whilst the various Colleges of Agriculture

were providing instruction in Science for the sons of the wealthy, there was no opportunity existing in England for that important class which has been well called "the back-bone of the country." Scotland and Ireland possessed valuable educational opportunities of this class, within the means of the small farmers, but that by no means insignificant portion of the United Kingdom, known as England, was absolutely unprovided for. It is no wonder, then, that the Wrexborough Chamber was recommended to ask the help of the Central Chamber of Agriculture in rectifying such a serious national want.


Mr. Holmes was greatly encouraged by the manner in which the instruction in the Principles of Agriculture was proceeding in the five elementary schools on the estate. Janet had given a prize for competition amongst these schools, and at the end of the first year it was gained by William Walsh, the son of the tenant of Lesser Coombe Farm, after a most satisfactory examination. His brother, Thomas Walsh, had in the previous May gained the Government £50 Scholarship, offered to the Wrexborough Science Class by the Squire, and his younger brother promised fair that he would follow in his footsteps as he advanced in years. Mr. Holmes was very sorry to find that there was some difficulty about Thomas Walsh accepting the Scholarship he had gained, for he had become exceedingly useful to his father, and the loss of his help would make a material difference on the small farm he occupied on the Holt Castle estate. Without much loss of time, Mr. Holmes called upon Mr. Walsh, and learnt full particulars. The father was very anxious to spare his son for the two years, if possible, but he found himself unable to do without his assistance.



He consented to send him to Rodney College, if Mr. Holmes would, as he had suggested, send him another young fellow to take his place. He also offered Thomas Walsh some assistance towards his travelling expenses and outfit, &c., if he would arrange to repay it out of his first salary. Upon this understanding, Thomas Walsh was able to accept the Scholarship without causing his father the smallest sacrifice, and it would be difficult to determine which of the three was most gratified at the conclusion arrived at.

Mr. Atherley and Donald Macpherson were making steady progress with the improvements on the Wyckham Estate, and these were receiving a considerable amount of attention from the farmers around. The lowering of the water in the Churl had already caused a marked difference in the herbage of the meadows, and there were very strong opinions expressed that a mistake had been made. Donald was frequently drawn into conversation with the tenants, and he generally managed to defend the policy for which he was locally held responsible. This familiar intercourse was calculated to be useful, because the tenants there were able to learn some particulars of those who were holding land under the Squire in the Midland district. With his usual judicious care, he had aroused their sympathies and personal interest in the proceedings going on upon the Holt Castle estate. Hence it was, that when he was informed of Mr. Holmes' wish, for the son of one of the tenants on the Wyckham Estate to be selected to take the duties which had been discharged by Thomas Walsh, he was soon able to select the most likely young fellow anywhere near him. His choice fell upon Thomas Drew, a smart young fellow of

about 18, and one who had been accustomed to work as hard, and live as poorly, as any of the farm labourers. He was tired of living on his father's farm, and was about to go into Yoxton to find work, when Donald most fortunately mentioned to him that Mr. Holmes had authorised him to send up a young fellow, and the general result was that he was selected for that purpose, and thus he released Thomas Walsh, who entered forthwith upon his career as a student in Rodney College. The selection proved to be a wise and prudent one, and, like many before him, a change to the more active scenes of the midland counties, inspired him with increased energy. Nothing, perhaps, caused him greater surprise than the fact of a young farmer like Thomas Walsh going to College, until Mr. Walsh suggested that he should go into Wrexborough once a week, and attend the Science Classes which were just about to commence for the winter session.



CHAPTER XXIV.

Land Improvements — Another Enemy made Valuable — Merit Rewarded—An Old and Faithful Servant Homeless—A Delightful Retreat—Dutiful Affection Rewarded—Teaching by Example.

DURING the summer which had now come to an end, great changes had arisen under the Wyckham improvements. The meadows alongside the Churl had been greatly altered, by the removal of the obstructions which had been raised for holding back water for driving the mill. The summer had been very hot, and the usual growth on the surface had been so much destroyed, that the prevailing opinion of the neighbourhood was that the meadows were spoilt. This result had been clearly anticipated by Mr. Holmes, for when the pasturage was examined by him—in consultation with Dr. Forester—they found scarcely any grasses of good quality, but a rank growth of aquatic grasses, and other plants of excessively low feeding character. The destruction of these plants was therefore greatly to be desired, and the hot weather of the summer and autumn did much to accomplish this result. There was not a single tenant on the Wyckham property, who did not know that it was unwise to let weeds grow upon tillage land, but at the same time there was not one

who applied the same rule to grass land. A growth of green stuff seemed to meet all the requirements of the case, so long as that growth took place on meadow land, and they were apparently quite content with this result. Still, although it appears almost contradictory to say so, most of them knew a piece of good herbage, when they happened to see it. However there was the fact standing to the discredit of the management, that it had spoilt the meadows, and herein the local judgment was quite unanimous, whilst to those who were directing the operations it was perfectly satisfactory, as accomplishing that which had been desired.

The alteration in the river Churl, had also been accompanied by the drainage of any wet portions of this meadow land which needed such help, and it must be acknowledged that the general result was a very miserable appearance of the surface. Now that the stagnant water had been brought under control, so that it could be easily removed from the soil, the time had arrived for applying water in such a manner that it should be usefully employed upon the land. Mr. Atherley had prepared plans and sections of the meadows, and a scheme had been decided upon for irrigating these meadows from one end to the other. Thereby the water was in the future to become a means for increasing the productive powers of the soil, instead of making the land grow a herbage which was practically worthless. In carrying out the plan which had been agreed upon, a considerable expenditure was made, in altering the form of the surface, and in making the necessary water channels. When the following spring was well advanced, the surface—which had been crumbled by the winter frosts—was sown with

selected grass seeds of suitable character, and every precaution was taken to secure their successful growth.


But during this interval, Thomas Drew was in occasional correspondence with the old folk at home, and his reports of the good farming on the Holt Castle Estate, as well as of the contented and well-to-do condition of the labourers, greatly raised their respect for their landlord and his agent. The intercourse which resulted from Thomas Drew's attendance at the Science Classes in Wrexborough, expanded in his mind, and aroused his somewhat dormant intellect. To him it was quite a new era in his life, for he gradually gained more and more light, which served to show him how little he knew of farming, or of the truths embodied in its practice. Those who knew Mr. Holmes' character were not surprised at the watchful care he gave to this young fellow, without appearing to do so. The fact is, he was anxious that when Thomas Drew returned to his home, he should go back with a more intelligent knowledge of his business, than he possessed when he came to reside at the Lesser Coombe Farm.

William Ellis had now become settled into the Abbotts Farm, and he found his position in reference to the young Squire, exceedingly pleasant and satisfactory. During the time the latter was free from the requirements of the University—consistent with his keeping his terms at Oxford—he resided at the Castle, but spent much of his time on the farm. Free as he was from all pecuniary anxieties, farming was to him a very pleasing occupation, and he became increasingly interested in it. To the outside world William Ellis was known to have been an applicant for the Abbotts Farm, and it was naturally

assumed that he had only been prevented taking the farm, by reason of the Squire's son having a temporary fancy for it. It was also looked upon as tolerably certain, that at no very distant date he would be the tenant of one of the nicest farms on the estate, for his management was good, and he was a great favourite with Reginald Woodford.


On the Holt Farm the new tenant had drifted into a misunderstanding with George Moore, the old shepherd, a man who had long been looked upon with feelings of very kindly regard by Mr. Holmes, and he had received notice to leave his situation. It is at all times painful to have to vacate a post of duty, especially one which has been a comfortable occupation through the greater part of a person's life, but it becomes increasingly so when the real cause of severance is being "worn out in the service," without any provision being made for the future. In such a case, it becomes intensely painful to look forward to "the Union," as the final home. Under ordinary circumstances this would have been George Moore's position, and the prospect of such a finishing up of an industrious life, had been at one time a source of deep anxiety to him. It must be admitted that the old man had been unequal to his work for some time past, and it was by no means unreasonable that Mr. Stevenson should object to retain him in the position he had so long occupied, simply because he had been a faithful servant to some one else. George Moore had therefore to give up his situation at once, and his successor had been already appointed.

Happily for him he had another home awaiting him, and we can readily understand how intensely glad his son, who was living on the Abbotts Farm, would be to realise the ruling object of his life, by offering a home to



his aged father and mother. He had for some time past anticipated the time when his father would have to give up his situation, and he had calculated how delighted his father would be to help him and his wife, by doing some light work in his large garden, and helping with the cow and the pigs. It was a happy evening when first they gathered around the fire in the son's cottage, and the rough and stormy weather which raged outside the cottage, only added to the happiness of the family group. If there be moments which reward a person for the labours of many years, such was that evening to Bill Moore. The resolve of the youth had been faithfully carried out, and he had also been guided into industrious and prudent habits, which enabled him to carry out his desire without its being a burthen to himself.

Such an accomplishment of this long-cherished desire was not unknown to Janet, but even if the weather had permitted of her doing so, she would not have intruded upon the joy of that evening. On the following day, however, she arranged with Mr. Holmes, so that under his escort she might look in upon the little group, as they were gathered around the evening fire, and she was then accompanied by her two sons Horace and Charlie. A bright, clear, frosty air made the walk agreeable, and the little fellows, who were then seven and five years of age respectively, enjoyed the little excursion greatly. Bill Moore was living in one of the cottages on the Abbots Farm, in fact, the same as Donald Macpherson had occupied, hence it did not take the party long to reach the house. The door was quickly opened in response to Janet's well-known voice, and a scene of homely comfort presented itself to their view. The great fire burnt brightly on the



hearth, around which George Moore and his aged wife had been seated, with their son and his wife. The room was very plainly furnished, but in a manner consistent with the heavy wear it would have to bear, but it was scrupulously clean and neat. Mary Moore soon had the party comfortably seated again, when Mr. Holmes took an early opportunity of saying to George Moore :

“We have all come over, George, to wish you and your wife much happiness in your son’s cottage. I have no doubt you will be helping him in his garden, and on the piece of meadow which he holds, and if you want a little outside work, you must let me know, for a willing workman, such as my old friend George Moore, shall not want for something to do.”

“It be mighty good of you, sir,” said George Moore, “to speak so kindly to me, and I thank you with all my heart. We were talking about my speaking to you for some work, and I shall be glad to have some, for so long as I have health and strength I shall like to help Bill on the land, and, as far as I can, bring in a bit of money besides.”

“I am glad to see you looking so happy, Bill Moore,” said Janet, “and your wife looks quite as pleased as yourself.”

“Well, there, ma’am, I am just happy, and that is the truth of the matter,” said Bill, “and no one knows better than you, how I have looked forward to this time coming. Yes, I am happy, and so is Mary too.”

“You did not like to leave your sheep, George, I suppose,” said Janet.

“It was sorry work leaving them,” said George Moore, “but the master was so good as to say, ‘Come up,

George, and look at 'em whenever you like,' so I shall look up now and then."

"I should have thought, Bill," said Mr. Holmes, "that two or three ewes running in your piece of meadow with your cow, would really have done the grass good. The ground is quite dry, and there is good shelter, and your father might then have some of his old friends. I dare say some of his old favourites are just those that Mr. Stephenson will soon be 'culling' out,' and he would probably 'cull' them now, to oblige me, as well as four months hence. I think they will pay you for buying, and if you can leave it to me, you can settle with me after you have got them home."

It was so arranged, and before the visitors left there were a few kindly words of encouragement given, which caused the family group to gather around their hearth as soon as their friends had departed, with hearts even more full of joy than before they had broken in upon the quiet chat of the early evening.

"Why were they all so very happy, mamma?" asked Horace, as they walked homewards.

"Because Bill Moore had done his duty towards his father and mother," said Janet. "When Bill was a boy about 13 years old, he saw his father was very sorry, because he thought that when he had worked as long as he could, that he and his wife would have to go to the Union workhouse, and live and die there. So Bill said to his father when he saw him so sorrowful:—'I'll do all I can, father, and if I can get on well my father shan't go to the workhouse, nor mother neither.' So he went to work as a good boy; he did not waste his money, but put it into the Savings Bank, and now he is a good workman,

and has a very happy home. A few days since George Moore had to give up his work at the Holt Farm, and instead of the old man and his wife going to the Union workhouse, they are now gone to share their son's happy home. This is the reason why they are all so happy."

"Do you think, mamma," asked Horace, "that Charlie and I can do something like that when we grow up?"

"You can do so, my dear child," said Janet, "if you follow the example Bill Moore has given you, and make the best of the opportunities which you may have to be good boys, and after that you may grow up to be good men. It is no wonder to me that they are all so happy, but I think Bill Moore is the happiest of all, because he feels that he has done most to bring it about."

"And, mamma, will you help us to do so?" inquired the little fellow.

"Yes, my dear Horace, you may rely upon it that your father and I will both help you."

CHAPTER XXV.


The Guardian of many Treasures comes under Protection—"Nil Desperandum" is discovered—A New Principal for Rodney College—School Gardens—The Labourer's Gratitude.

THE history of Wyndham College showed very little variation from the steady progress already recorded. The novelty of the work had long since terminated, and there was a steady inflow and outflow of students, each leaving the College in a well-prepared condition for the general duties of life. How many happy homes traced much of their joy and prosperity to the instruction given at Wyndham College, it would be very difficult to say. One fact was beyond question—that if any girl who had these opportunities for preparing for the duties of Home life, failed to become competent for them, it was the result of a want of personal ability or skill. For nearly eight years had Ellen Temple held the position of Lady Principal, and discharged the varied duties of that position with discretion and marked ability. She had that happy tact which made matters glide in the right direction, without coming into collision with something else working towards the same destination. Whilst maintaining the strictest discipline, the ruling influence was shown in her com-

mand of the affections of those she had to control, rather than in their fear of any penal consequences attaching to disobedience. Thus the Committee of Management had their cares and anxieties reduced to a minimum, and her colleagues and the students were happy in the discharge of their daily duties.

Janet had always entertained feelings of high esteem for Ellen Temple, and she had occasionally visited at her house, but by her brother's special request she had urged her spending the approaching short Christmas vacation at Holt Cottage. With some hesitation on her part, the invitation was at length accepted, and her arrival was looked forward to by the children with great pleasure, for she was quite a favourite with these. Each of them had a little packet of news for her. Horace was full of what Bill Moore had done, and of their visit to his cottage, and how happy he and Charlie would be when they had cottages of their own. But Charlie and Alice were more interested about their Uncle Charlie, who had gone away, and who was so long in coming to see them, and he was the sum and substance of their talk. The childish talk was a pleasing theme for Ellen Temple to listen to, and as children soon know whether or not their conversation commands the sympathies of those they are addressing, she frequently came in for a liberal allowance.

The Christmas Eve of that year will not soon be forgotten by some of that group, for whilst all were enjoying themselves with the amusements common at such a time, their fun was momentarily checked by Charlie Webster coming in to spend a few days with them. The interruption was but brief, and the tide of joy then flowed again with redoubled force. Charlie Webster soon found



it convenient to excuse himself from the amusement, whilst he had some conversation with his sister as they watched the happy group. He had never till then, had an opportunity of seeing Ellen Temple free from the claims of duty, or, as he familiarly described it, "out of harness." Children possess irresistible powers for preventing persons being rigidly particular in their form and manners, especially if they command your affection. Thus, although Ellen Temple would have considered it "the proper thing," to have assumed a certain reserve in her manners, because Mr. Charles Webster was present, the attempt was absolutely useless, and it was quickly given up. The Christmas-tide which began so happily was a very enjoyable holiday for Ellen Temple, and it gave Charlie Webster the opportunity he had sought, for forming a fuller acquaintance with this young lady, especially when free from the restraints of "official duty."

Ellen Temple had never discovered who was the individual, who, under the title of "Nil Desperandum," had established the scholarship whereby she had risen from the general group, into a position of some distinction and credit. It is easy to understand, that the desire to know such an individual, will grow with increased rapidity just as the results become more valuable. She had therefore sought to learn from Janet the name of the unknown donor, but she failed to gain any fuller knowledge of the facts. One further hope, and one only, appeared to remain, and that was to endeavour to learn the name from Charlie Webster. Yet it was constantly postponed, and a break-up of the party had been arranged for the following day. It was rapidly becoming a question of now or never, and she resolved to seize the first opportunity

which should offer. At last the suitable moment arrived, and she instantly commenced the inquiry by saying—

“I have been anxiously waiting for some days, Mr. Webster, to ask you a great favour, but I hesitated, from a fear of displeasing you.”

“This is very singular indeed,” said Charlie Webster, “for I have been in just the same position myself, for I have been waiting to ask you a question, and I have not liked to do so. I beg that you will not hesitate any longer.”

“I want to know who is ‘Nil Desperandum,’” said Ellen Temple.


“What reward do you offer for his discovery?” asked Charlie Webster.

“It is very little that I can offer,” said Ellen Temple; “but I would give much of what I possess to know the name.”

“I accept the terms,” said Charlie Webster. “I am ‘Nil Desperandum,’ and the reward I claim is your hand, provided I have already won your heart.”

After a brief interval—which need not be referred to in detail—the hand was discreetly given, for it only followed a deep and sincere affection, which Ellen Temple had for many years allowed to slumber in her breast, awaiting his call, or else there to perish.

This was not the only educational institute which was about to lose its chief, for Dr. Thomson had resigned his position as Principal of Rodney College, and very much to the regret of all associated in the work he had so long and so successfully directed. The cause of his resigning his position, was a natural consequence of his accepting a responsible position in connection with the Museum of




Practical Agriculture, which the Government had decided to establish forthwith. The important influence of this great National industry, had commended itself as worthy of support from the public funds, for two very important reasons. In the first place, the injury which results from food being grown which is unfavourable to the health of the consumer; and in the second place, the economical advantages resulting from the increase in the home production of food, possessing the highest nutritive character. These were inducements of no ordinary character, and they were considered to be of such importance to the commonwealth, that aid was decided to be given in promoting the objects in view. The Museum of Practical Agriculture was consequently decided upon, and the names of Dr. Thomson and his colleagues were shortly after made public.

At Rodney College the loss was severely felt, but, by the unanimous vote of the staff, Professor Nicholson was recommended as a fitting successor to Dr. Thomson, and the Council confirmed the appointment. There was little new in reference to Rodney College. Year by year it produced its crop of well-trained students, just as a fertile soil will, under good management, yield a large growth of choice grain. The whole machine was in good working order, and those who were in command had the prudence to be content with the excellent work it was steadily yielding. It was with this feeling that the new Principal entered upon his path of duty, and a long-continued success awaited him.

Sufficient time had now elapsed for enabling a satisfactory conclusion to be arrived at respecting the advantages or otherwise, of attaching a small garden to the

Leaside Elementary Schools. The results were distinctly favourable and encouraging. The instruction on the Principles of Agriculture, was more fully realised by means of the garden work. The words learnt, had been transformed into ideas, and these had been fixed on the mind. The memory was no longer taxed with a set form of words, but the understanding grasped the truth those words were intended to convey. With such encouraging results, there was every inducement to give the use of a small piece of land for each of the five Elementary Schools on the Estate.

Of the various departments connected with estate management, the welfare of the labourer ranks very high, and in this respect there was manifestly a most satisfactory work progressing upon the Holt Castle Estate. It was daily becoming evident, that what Janet had accomplished on the Abbotts Farm, could be done elsewhere by those who were disposed to act in a similar manner. The true secret of success, had there been shown to consist in a series of conditions being supplied, which enabled the home to be rendered comfortable, the food strengthening to the body, and the mind happy; then contentment was found to be the natural outcome. The success was determined by the completeness with which the work was done, just as the efficiency of a machine depends upon all its working parts being supplied. To omit one wheel, is often quite enough to render a valuable machine unfit for its work. In how much greater degree may we expect this to arise in dealing with the labourer. You cannot command his affection by gifts, but if you help him to help himself, and thereby aid him in taking a higher and nobler position, you will seldom find him unworthy of




that help. An employer who seeks to make his labourers grateful will generally be disappointed in his expectations. If, however, a man endeavours to make his labourers happy in their homes, and openly avows the fact that his only object in doing so is to make them better workmen, he is likely to succeed, and he will also command the respect of the men. They see through the flimsy veil which so often screens the treatment they receive, and above all things they rebel against the so-called charitable treatment which is offered to them. It was a great satisfaction to the Squire, to see the general improvement in the prosperity of the labourers and their wives throughout the estate. He saw in it one of the best possible proofs that they were gradually establishing that common interest, between the Landlord, the Tenant, and the Labourer, which promised to yield advantages to each, by reason of their individual benefits having been considered, with due regard to the rights and interests of the other members of the group.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Museum of Practical Agriculture—Agricultural Specimens becoming Teachers of Truth—A Commission of Inquiry—Danger Signals discovered—Causes of Success—Prevention better than Cure—The Government commended.

THE establishment of a Museum of Practical Agriculture in London, following upon the precedent which had been established in the instance of the Museum of Practical Geology, was hailed with the greatest satisfaction by the Landlord and the Tenants on the Holt Castle Estate. They had for some years previously, done all they could to organise themselves for giving mutual help and assistance, and they had gained considerably by doing so. The organisation which had been commenced, by the tenantry carrying out experiments for determining the most economical manures for them to purchase, had saved a considerable amount annually. The inquiry had not terminated even at this very important point, but had been extended so far as to learn the variations in the quality of the produce thus obtained. The experimental trials which the Squire had so long encouraged, had given tolerably clear evidence upon the variations in the feeding value of their crops, but that work had been only recently



reduced to any very definite knowledge of the facts. Having, therefore, done all that they could in this direction, it was a source of the deepest satisfaction to know, that the Government had provided supplemental assistance in the form of a Museum of Practical Agriculture, having for its especial object the improved and increased production of food for the Nation. Here there was an union in the interests of the producer and consumer, the results aimed at being a more economical production on the one hand, and on the other, a more wholesome condition of the food produced.

It was to many a source of surprise that the tenantry should be so much interested in the formation of a museum, for these are commonly considered to be places in which bottles and cases containing a number of dried specimens of farm produce are shown, whilst many of the visitors had seen better and also worse specimens on their own farms, or in their own neighbourhood. Even those who admitted that they were interesting, failed to consider them instructive. Hence the opinions of the tenants on the Holt Castle Estate, were looked upon as somewhat beyond the merits of the case. They had, however, received some information from Mr. Holmes, whereby they saw how greatly their own interests would be thereby advanced. He had explained to them that which he considered to be the secret cause of such a museum being valuable to them.

"The human body," said he, "gives an abundant opportunity for students of various classes, in considering its various powers and its many peculiarities. So also does a Museum of Agriculture, but the usefulness of both depends upon another condition, and that is the vital

force by which they may be animated. A Museum of Agriculture may contain numberless specimens of agricultural produce, and yet it may at the same time be as devoid of practical value, as the catacombs containing only the bodies of the dead. The value of the museum centres in the vital force by which it may be animated, a power which makes every specimen exhibited, 'tell its own tale.' If it speaks not to the visitor, it is as a dead body; but the thing exhibited only does its duty by telling its own history, pointing out the lessons which may be learnt thereby; then it becomes, as it were, a living reality, teaching some important truths."

"But," continued Mr. Holmes, "the vital force by which this Museum of Practical Agriculture is animated emanates from a group of experts, who impart to that museum that instructive and useful character, whereby alone those objects can be secured for which it was established. To understand the utility of such an institution we are therefore compelled to look beyond the mere machine, and we must inform ourselves of the motive power by which it can be rendered useful, as well as ornamental. The Director of the museum has invited those connected with or engaged in agriculture, to bring under his notice any difficulties which interfere with the success of their farm operations, so that professional assistance may be rendered by the staff of experts engaged at the museum. You know that we have cases of splenic apoplexy and pleurisy, frequently arising upon some of the farms on this estate, and local skill has been unable to prevent these losses. Within our own district—but happily not upon this estate—the lung disease has caused enormous losses, and I hope that after we have invited

the counsel and help of the museum officials, others will probably like to follow our example."

"There is, however, one point of view," said Mr. Holmes, "in which the consumer is even more interested than we are, I mean in the influence exerted on the health of the Nation, by the consumption of food which is capable of producing disease. An animal having been taken ill upon a farm, if it be in good fleshy condition, it is very generally killed at once, *before it gets worse*, and as the disease may at this stage be so undeveloped that the meat cannot be condemned, it is consequently sold laden with the germs of disease. It is not only in the interests of farmers that this work has been taken up by Government, but in the interests of the Nation at large. At any rate, our interests and our duties, encourage us to render to the movement every assistance in our power."

It will not cause the reader any surprise to know that the tenants were cordially agreed as to the desirability of giving such help, and even those who had not suffered from the disease determined to co-operate, as they were certain to secure some indirect advantages by doing so. The assistance applied for by the Squire was speedily granted, and three experts were appointed to visit the property. The fact of these being old and familiar friends, added greatly to the enthusiasm with which Dr. Thomson, Dr. Forester, and Dr. McAdam were received. A meeting of the tenantry and others interested in the question took place in the Town Hall, Wrexborough, and evidence was taken as to the general facts of the case. An adjournment then took place, and the property was very carefully inspected, many of the tenants giving most valuable information as they accompanied the experts over the land.

In the evening of the day a further meeting took place, and a free exchange of views was encouraged.

"You will probably be surprised to hear," said Dr. Forester, "that I find upon much of the district we examined to-day, some particular plants which are always present where the splenic apoplexy causes these losses. I have examined several localities on which this disease has caused very serious losses, but in each and every case I have found these particular plants. The general growth has varied greatly, but these special plants have put in a regular appearance, and I may tell you that I think these may be taken as 'danger signals.' At any rate, I really hope, by the assistance of my colleagues, we shall be able to satisfy ourselves why these plants grow on such disease-producing lands, and it may be, we shall be able to recommend to you some plan, whereby neither these plants, nor splenic apoplexy, shall be able to exist there. The circumstances which are favourable to the one are also favourable for the other, and as soon as these are known, we shall probably see how these circumstances may be so modified, that both shall no longer trouble you. You must work with us, and we will help you, for it is only by such joint action that success can be secured."

The general discussion and exchange of views which took place that evening, resulted in a closer bond of union between these scientific experts and the tenantry of the estate, but the key of the mystery was revealed by one of the oldest tenants saying—

"If those three gentlemen had not been acquainted with farming, they would not have taken such sound views of the case. I never like to hear men give opinions upon the science of any business, of which they know

nothing. They are sure to make some serious mistakes, and what is even worse, they treat us as if we knew nothing of the business of our lives."

When Dr. Thomson and his associated commissioners returned to London, they took with them specimens of the turf and general herbage, as well as specimens of the soil and the rock beneath. The perishable specimens were modelled, so that an accurate view was preserved of the herbage, and side by side with these, the herbage was shown as it exists in other districts, subject to the same diseases. The typical plants were thus easily recognised, and in this way an important truth, known only to one or two scientific experts, became familiarly known to every farmer looking at the specimens in the museum, and to him such specimens would speak as with a living voice.

As the investigation proceeded, so they were able to mark out upon a map the districts specially subject to the disease, and at the same time indicate the conditions which favoured the appearance of the disease. What was of even greater importance than this, was the information given as to the prevention of this disease. If ever the truth of the proverb, "Prevention is better than cure," be fully realised, it will be in connection with cases like the present one, in which farmers have to contend with an unseen enemy, and in which the consumer is unconsciously preparing himself for coming under medical care, by taking the germs of disease into his own system. As the inquiry proceeded, so was it also shown that injury to the health of the human subject, was not restricted to the use of meat, but that, by the imperfectly matured produce of the land, disease is being spread to an

extent far beyond our imagination. In other words, the farmers' difficulties, reverted upon some of the consumers of his produce, with manifest advantages to the medical profession.

Some persons went so far as to say that the Museum of Practical Agriculture would do little for agriculture, but six months' work disproved such "evil forebodings," for there was the clearest possible evidence to the contrary. Nothing caused greater astonishment, even to those who had previously the best opportunities for informing themselves on such matters, than the results shown by the registration of the losses of farm stock by various diseases, and of the still larger number which are killed under "doubtful or unknown conditions of disease." Thus did the work progress, doing most important services to the nation at large, and at a singularly small annual cost. It reflected great credit upon the Government by which it was established, and it gradually tended to exert a very marked influence upon the prosperity of agriculture and upon the health of the Nation.


CHAPTER XXVII.

New Students of Agriculture—From Labour to Refreshment—
Increase in Food Production—Silence gives Consent—Claimants
for Water Meadows — Good Management resulting in Good
Work.

As an opportunity offered for Mr. Holmes to visit the Wyckham property in the neighbourhood of Churminster, he was accompanied by Mr. Reginald Woodford, and both proceeded to Bradford-on-the-Yeo. They arrived at Dr. Forester's house, just in convenient time for joining his party, as they were going to Mr. Atherley's village lecture. It is desirable perhaps to state at this point, that Mr. Atherley had been asked to give a course of village lectures at Waterton, and this he had arranged to do. With a view to their own improvement, some of the upper class residents of the district made a point of attending these lectures with regularity, and many engaged in agricultural pursuits also put in a very constant appearance. Dr. Forester generally presided, and gave the lecturer encouragement and kindly advice, so that these gatherings were really exceedingly pleasant and agreeable, as well as thoroughly instructive. Dr. Forester's daughters usually accompanied him, as well as some mem-

bers of the Hill family, who had clearly determined to distinguish themselves by excelling in connection with agricultural industry, just as their ancestor had in another section of work made his name famous, and had thereby gained the thanks of the Nation. The family groups and the two visitors, were systematically distributed between the several carriages at command, and it was evident that however much they were going to work upon the subject matter of the lecture, they were resolved to enter upon the ordeal with cheerfulness, and with a good flow of spirits. It naturally made Mr. Atherley somewhat nervous before his lecture, to have Mr. Reginald Woodford and Mr. Holmes present, but the latter was far too good a general in any way to check a zealous volunteer, and he consequently aided him onwards by a few kindly remarks before the lecture commenced. Mr. Atherley acquitted himself well, and drew warm commendations from Mr. Holmes, and the audience generally. When the lecture was over, Mr. Atherley rode back to Churminster, as Mr. Reginald Woodford and Mr. Holmes did not intend to proceed there until early the next day. The result of this was one of those enjoyable gatherings at Hillhampton House, which had become quite proverbial in the district, and at a later hour Dr. Forester and his party proceeded to Bradford-on-the-Yeo.

Nothing would do on the following morning but that Dr. Forester should accompany his late pupil and Mr. Holmes, and his very kind and generous disposition favoured their wishes. This inspection of the Wyckham property had some new and pleasing features about it, for many improvements had been made since their original inspection took place.



"I had no idea you had such splendid water-meadows here, Mr. Holmes," said Reginald Woodford.

"I can say the same," said Dr. Forester, "the plans have been splendidly carried out and with great success. I have no doubt this land will produce fully ten times the quantity of actual food which it used to yield. I am charmed with the appearance of the meadows, and I must say there is great credit due to you, and those acting under you."

"I am also very much pleased with the look of affairs," said Mr. Holmes, "and I speak the more freely, because I cannot claim the credit of the scheme, as my friend Dr. Forester supplied the leading outlines, as a professional expert. Still the general details look fairly satisfactory. However, here come Mr. Atherley and Donald Macpherson. I am glad to see you, Donald. The south country certainly agrees with you, judging from your healthy looks."

After the usual interchange of inquiries, Donald named to Mr. Holmes the wish expressed by the tenant of the Moorland Barton, whose son, Thomas Drew, had been sent up to Mr. Walsh's farm, expressing a hope that he might see him before he left. The water-meadows were carefully inspected, and were found in good order and in a very satisfactory condition, the works having been thoroughly well carried out.

"And what do the good folk around here think of these improvements, Donald," asked Mr. Holmes.

"Well, sir, to be fair to them," said Donald, "they have kept their tongues quiet of late. There's a wee bit more caution in their talk. But you can certainly get three times the old rent for the land, and many would be glad to take to it at that rate."

"That is about the best evidence of their good opinion," said Mr. Holmes. "Now, Mr. Atherley, what is your idea as to the best mode of letting these water-meadows. Should they be let to one or more tenants?"

"As you ask me to give an opinion," said Mr. Atherley, "I think it would be better to give a portion to each of the upland farms, rather than to let it to any one, or even to two tenants, who have no tillage land. If I were to go beyond this, I would suggest that the extent of water-meadows should be somewhat proportioned to the quantity of tillage land held."

"A very reasonable and prudent reply," said Mr. Holmes, "and I will now ask you to make a tracing from the estate map, giving me your scheme in full detail. You can report to me at the same time how you would carry out the alterations, and probably in conversation with Donald you will learn something of the financial position of these tenants. Because they live hard, and avoid spending money, we must not conclude that they have none. Take all these particulars into consideration, and embody them in your report to me. I must congratulate you upon the accuracy of your surveys in these meadows, and to Donald I give my thanks for paying such careful attention to the working details. We will now go up the rising ground, and give a call at the Moorland Barton."

"If Dr. Forester is agreeable to it," said Reginald Woodford, "he and I will examine the grasses upon these meadows, and compare them with the unimproved growth, whilst you visit any of the farms around."

It was thus arranged, and Mr. Holmes made an inspection of some of the upland farms, accompanied by

Mr. Atherley and Donald Macpherson. George Drew and his wife were pleased to see Mr. Holmes, for they had heard much of him from their son Thomas, who had now been away from the Moorland Barton nearly 18 months. They naturally desired to hear of his appearance and progress, and especially as to what could be done for him when he returned in another half-year hence. On inquiry it appeared that if a small farm should offer they had a bit of money "out at interest," and would like to have him settled near to them. The ultimate issue was that Mr. Holmes looked upon him as one to be located in a farm, and in his future arrangements this was not forgotten. Mr. Atherley also intimated that he liked the country very much, and hoped that an opportunity would offer for him to take a farm there, which he might hold in addition to the local agency.

"There would be many and great advantages from having a thoroughly well-managed farm on this estate," said Mr. Holmes, "and from what I have seen of you I should think you would manage it successfully. I will only say that if your wishes can be carried out, any scheme for doing so will be favourably considered. I am bound to tell you, however, that the condition of the tenantry here will need something more than a good agent to raise them to a healthy tone of mind. His wife will be as influential as he will be, and this is probably a matter you have never taken into your calculation."

"The fact is," said Mr. Atherley, "that my calculation really commenced at that very point, and I am glad you have mentioned it."

"Under these circumstances, you will be doubly interested in preparing your report," said Mr. Holmes.

"Possibly some one will be wanting to give up his farm, just as the Mill was surrendered to us when we wanted to begin our improvements here. However, so far as I can fairly help you, I will do so. Just mention to Donald what you want, he can see deeper into matters than many."

When Mr. Holmes got back to Churminster, he informed Dr. Forester and Mr. Reginald Woodford that he could not possibly return to Bradford-on-the-Yeo that night, and it was arranged for these gentlemen to return in the carriage, leaving Mr. Holmes to proceed direct homewards on the following day. The result of their examination of the grasses was very interesting, but it corresponded with previous observations. Even where the turf had not been broken by the alterations, the grasses that held the more prominent position whilst the meadows were wet from stagnant water, were now dwarfed in growth, or else exterminated. There were other grasses now in the ascendancy, and these were much more nutritive as a crop. These flourished, because the conditions of fertility had been improved, and the reward of good management was a great increase in the weight of the grass grown, and a decided improvement in quality. The land had long suffered from an excess of water and from floods, but under the new improvements the supply of water had been largely increased. It was just an additional illustration of the importance of making a right and a proper use of natural agencies. When the conditions of the land favoured the passage of water through the soil, so long as it continued its onward flow it carried in its train many fertilising influences, but when this onward flow was stopped, and the water became stagnant in the

soil, a series of unfavourable circumstances were thereby established.

To those who in after years inspected this estate, a continued extension of similar improvements was observable. Changes in the habits of the tenantry were but slowly accomplished, and it was only as younger men were gradually received as the occupants of the land, that any very marked alteration was observable in this respect. The improvements made by the landlord were generally found to be remunerative, although many were strongly objected to in the first instance. With Donald's assistance, and by the retirement of some of the older tenants, the farms were somewhat altered in their general arrangement, as opportunity offered. But in one of the lovely valleys on the Wyckham property, there was a small but very well cultivated farm observable by those who passed by on the Churminster turnpike road. Its produce was noted throughout the district as generally of the highest quality, and the tenant of that land was Mr. Atherley, the local agent of the estate. At a distance of scarcely two miles, Donald and Jessie Macpherson had a nice little dairy farm, having a good repute, which was fairly profitable to them. The old tenant of the Moorland Barton had been succeeded by his son Thomas Drew, who was one of the most intelligent farmers in that neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XXVIII

*Disappointed Hopes—Clever Scheming—A Good Fellow Miss-led
—The Doctor's Last Patient—Successful Treatment—Woman's
Influence controlled by Revenge—The Happy Home—Re-union
of Fellow-workers.*

As soon as Charlie Webster's engagement was made known, a feeling of disappointment and intense vexation reigned in one breast, for although he had never paid any special attention to Gertrude Newbold, she had gradually looked upon him as her lawful prize. She had, as usual, come down to the Manor House Farm for the hunting season, and much as she was vexed in consequence of Charlie Webster not even calling upon her during his short stay at Christmas, her indignation knew no bounds when she afterwards heard of his being engaged, and that an early marriage was contemplated. The vexation was increased by her companion, Marion Trevor, having been married to Mr. Stevenson, and being expected at the Holt farm in a few days. Instead of taking counsel with her brother and his wife, she decided upon her own course, and went as straight for it, as if it had been a fence in the hunting field. In pursuance of her resolve, she became one of Mrs. Stevenson's earliest callers, and also her most en-

thusiastic friend. The relationships previously existing between them enabled this to be very easily accomplished, and she certainly managed to exert a powerful influence in that new home. The object she sought to gain was the opportunity of meeting William Ellis, who was residing at the Abbots Farm, for he was a very frequent visitor at Mr. Stevenson's house, but he was no favourite at the Manor House, and consequently he very rarely called there. It is unnecessary to notice in detail the various artifices which were practised. The prospect of a moderate sum of money from her father did not in any way detract from her natural charms, and as William Ellis was greatly flattered by her attentions, their marriage was ultimately arranged to take place upon the same day as Charlie Webster led his bride to the altar. Thus far, then, she considered that she had revenged herself, and she had at any rate secured the home in which she had so long desired to live.

The household arrangements, which had been perfectly satisfactory to William Ellis, were soon found to be no longer sufficient for his wife's requirements, and additional servants were also engaged. As the season advanced, a visit to London was absolutely necessary, and her husband was expected to take her up to her father's house for a time. But the care of the farm prevented his taking more than a very short term of absence, and she had to be left in town, whilst he returned to attend to his work, and to look after the servants at home. The expenses of his home had been entirely altered by his marriage, and as a fact they were considerably greater than his income, so that he soon found he would have to make use of some of the capital his father had offered him when he thought of

taking the Abbots Farm. To this waste of the capital, his father very naturally and prudently objected. He was therefore obliged to ask his wife to share with him the income arising under her settlement, so as to help him to meet the increased household expenses. William Ellis, however, soon discovered that he had altogether misunderstood the uses of such settlements, and he then found it absolutely necessary to endeavour to keep his expenditure within his salary. When Gertrude returned from her London visit, perfectly charmed with its brilliancy and its gaiety, it was no ordinary disappointment to her to find that she had to make herself useful in household matters, or to live in a perfect scene of confusion and misery. William Ellis had not the income to keep up the establishment his wife desired, and he distinctly refused to do so. It was quite natural that under these circumstances the serenity of the home was often disturbed, and each wished the other out of the way. One of them, however, was obliged to remain, for William Ellis had his daily duties to attend to ; but, partly from vexation and partly from other causes, Gertrude's health failed, and she had to pay a lengthened visit to London. Every effort had been made to screen these circumstances from the knowledge of others, and the attempt had secured a certain measure of success. Still it was whispered that they did not appear to be particularly happy, and William Ellis certainly became far less competent than he had been for the discharge of his responsible duties. So far had this neglect of duties extended, that Mr. Reginald Woodford had even asked Mr. Holmes to look into the position of farm matters on his behalf. The full truth was then gradually revealed by William Ellis, and it appeared that,

overpressed as he had been in consequence of his wife's extravagance, he had made use of some of the money he had received, and there was a deficiency in his accounts, which his father immediately paid.

Early on the following day a messenger came to the Estate Office asking for some assistance to be sent to the Abbots Farm, as Mr. Ellis was seriously ill. Mr. Burch, who had been a pupil on that farm, but was now engaged in the Estate Office, was at once sent to see to the farm work, whilst Mr. Holmes went to see William Ellis. He found him very deeply depressed, and in a thoroughly disabled condition of mind, but he gave him the very comforting assurance that he would be properly cared for, both as regarded his health and his future employment. Dr. Whichcord was soon in attendance, and Gertrude Ellis was telegraphed for from London. Later in the day the doctor called again, so that he might see her soon after her arrival. It was evident to him that she felt sadly annoyed at the summons she had received, for she said "it had prevented her going to a thoroughly jolly ball that night."

"It is my duty," said Dr. Whichcord, "to tell you that, humanly speaking, you hold your husband's life in your hands. You can crush it, and his death will lie at your door, or you can devote yourself to his recovery, and I think he will pull through."

"I will do nothing unkind, Dr. Whichcord, as a matter of course," said Gertrude Ellis, "but he has made the home so utterly miserable, that I care little for it."

"With such feelings of indifference towards him, what ever induced you to marry him?" asked Dr. Whichcord.

"I have never told any one as yet," said Gertrude Ellis, "but I did it to spite Mr. Webster."

“What, my young friend Charlie Webster !” exclaimed the doctor. “Surely he has done nothing to excite your anger, and, even if he has, are you intending to punish your husband and yourself, with the idea that you are hurting him. Be wise, and let your husband command your affection, and let all around you see that you can follow in the footsteps of that faithful, devoted wife, whose name is so closely associated with the Abbotts. At present my friend Charlie will only rub his hands with satisfaction that he has had a lucky escape, and in any case he cannot but form a very low estimate of your personal worth.”

The circumstances were far too critical to admit of any indefinite and common-place comments, and Dr. Whichcord spoke as a true friend, and without any reservation as to the consequences likely to result from the feelings of revenge which had for months past guided her conduct. At length he aroused her more noble feelings, and he was glad to hear her say,

“It is true, Dr. Whichcord, that for some months past I have been acting under feelings of suppressed passion, and that I have yielded unscrupulously to their guidance, but I thank you a thousand times, Dr. Whichcord, for your severe but kindly reproof. Believe me, the Abbotts shall no longer rest under any such discredit.”

After giving full directions as to his patient, Dr. Whichcord called on Mr. Holmes to report progress, and on leaving him he said to him, “The Abbotts has given me two striking examples of the power of woman’s influence. In your own case, rightly and prudently directed, it has made you a happy and prosperous man ; but in William Ellis’s case it has rendered him miserable, and

brought him to death's door. Depend upon it that woman's influence is a most powerful agency, either for good, or for evil. I am not without hope that we shall see a change there, and a few kindly hints from your wife will now be well received."

The following day Janet called at the Abbots and had a long interview with Gertrude Ellis. She was pleased to find that under Gertrude's care her husband was improving, and this report was confirmed when Dr. Whichcord subsequently called. Gradually the patient recovered. It soon became one of William Ellis's greatest comforts, to see that he possessed a thoroughly devoted and affectionate wife, whose chief delight was centred in her home, and who acted in pleasing unison with her neighbours at the Holt and the Manor House, even in rendering kindly offices to the labourers on the farm. Nothing was wanting now to encourage him in the performance of his duties, further than a private intimation from Mr. Holmes, that all the circumstances of the case had been made known to Mr. Reginald Woodford, who wished any error in the past to be considered as blotted from memory. A happy home was again to be found at the Abbots, and the Doctor, who has now retired from practice, is very fond of saying that the singular incidents connected with one of his last patients, were, to his mind, a source of long-continued satisfaction and pleasure.

A visit from Principal Nicholson and his wife during the first vacation after his appointment to the headship of Rodney College, was naturally made an occasion for some festivity. Situated upon the Holt Castle Estate, there were many who had been under his instruction, and who entertained feelings of the highest esteem for him.

The Rodney Club, however, undertook the arrangements for giving him a suitable reception. It was ultimately decided that it should take place in the Assembly Rooms at Wrexborough, which were immediately over the Science Schools, so closely associated with the history of that neighbourhood. Mrs. Woodford, who had very kindly acted as patroness of the first conversazione, again consented to be present, and we may be sure the Squire was there also. The reception was divested of all unnecessary formalities, and it was a thoroughly happy gathering. Those, however, whose knowledge of associated circumstances enabled them to penetrate within the secret reflections of the assembled group, found much to interest them. The Squire and Mrs. Woodford could only but be rejoiced to see the intelligent bearing of many present, whom they had helped to advance by their respective scholarships. Mr. Holmes Senior and his wife, would naturally call to mind the golden tints of the Great Willow Tree, and the good results which had flowed from beneath it. Mrs. Webster was happy in seeing the honour Janet cheerfully conferred upon her sister and her husband, thereby making herself still more beloved by those who knew her. Around her she saw other evidences of her good work, for in Clara Newbold and Annie Hughes, no one could recognise their former characters, distinguished as they now were, by their well-known excellencies in their discharge of the duties of life. The evening was far advanced when, by the unexpected appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Webster, fresh joy and happiness was diffused amongst these assembled friends. But an observant eye might have seen at a later period of the evening, a small group, consisting of three persons, in deep and earnest

conversation. They were Mr. Holmes, Principal Nicholson, and Mr. Webster. Each of them had been tracing out the many interesting associations, between the Wrexborough Science Schools and their present positions of honour, as well as their domestic happiness. When the festivities of the evening had ended, but one feeling pervaded the minds of those who were present—a conviction that much good work had been accomplished, and that many acts of disinterested kindness had been well rewarded.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Audit Dinner—Reviewing a Good Landlord's Policy—The Advantages of Joint Action—Welcome to a New Tenant Farmer—Our Agent commended—The Last Looker-on becomes a Worker.

THE annual Rent Audit Dinner was again held in the Castle, and on this occasion the Squire was supported by his brother-in-law, General Robert Wyndham, whilst Reginald Woodford took his seat as the tenant of the Abbotts Farm. As soon as the usual toasts of the evening had been duly honoured, the Squire addressed his tenantry as follows :—

“The time has now come when it is alike my duty and my pleasure, to acknowledge your many acts of kindness during the year which has now passed. It has been my desire to co-operate with you in the advancement of our mutual interests, and I think we may look back upon the past year with the satisfaction of knowing, that at any rate we have laboured with a fair measure of success, even under many adverse circumstances. But if we take a review of a longer period of time, we shall see some signs of material progress having been made. I well remember my visit to the Holt Farm, when our agent Mr. Holmes, was then a youngster

fresh from attending his first course of science lectures under Mr. Nicholson, and the impression it made upon my mind, to hear the very graphic description he gave me of the cause of mildew on swedes. I felt assured that the action of the Government was a wise and prudent course of procedure, and one well calculated to make agriculture become a thoroughly intellectual pursuit. Acting on this conviction, I established two Government £50 scholarships, one of which is, as you know, competed for annually. We have a very satisfactory sprinkling of men on this estate, who have undergone a regular course of study in Rodney College, and have since returned here to take a complete instruction in farm practice. I have stated on previous occasions, and I now repeat, that this expenditure of £50 a year has been the best investment I have made upon my property. I know that our agent recently found the immense advantage of having well-trained men to co-operate with him in resisting the progress of the foot and mouth disease. I know full well that if we were to be threatened tomorrow with it, the enemy would soon be defeated. But why do I feel so confident of this result? Simply because you are not contending with an unknown and mysterious foe, but, as you know its habits and character, you can stamp it out. What has taken place on this estate, I feel perfectly satisfied ought to become general throughout the kingdom, and if this were so, not only would those interested in agriculture be greatly advantaged, but it would be beneficial for the Nation at large.

“I am bound to tell you how very pleased I am to find, that we made the first application for assistance from the Government Museum of Practical Agriculture.


I also hear that the intelligent communication of carefully observed facts, which was made to the commissioners who visited this estate, has greatly facilitated the investigations of these gentlemen elsewhere. The new museum is already supplied with models showing the typical plants which indicate danger to the health of live stock, and specimens of the soils on which such difficulties most frequently arise. Believe me when I say, that whilst we work together in the advancement of our own agricultural practice, we shall also be contributing indirectly to the general welfare of our country. Nor must we ever forget the fact, that the happiness and prosperity of the labourer, is an important condition for securing our own success. I hope that on this estate the three-fold interest in the land—that of the Landlord, the Tenant, and the Labourer—may never be severed, but as time rolls on I trust that it will become more and more permanently united.”

“I have been asked, sir,” said Mr. Thomas Hughes, “by some of those around me, to rise, and, in the name of the tenantry of this estate, to thank you for the manner in which you have acted towards us. We feel that it was no unmeaning remark which you once made to us, in saying that we are all rowing in the same boat. It is a great pleasure to us to see Mr. Reginald Woodford taking part in farming, for there can be little doubt that he must thereby become acquainted with difficulties which are never observed, except by those actually engaged in the work. In wishing you, sir, health and happiness, we also hope that the tenant of the Abbots Farm may long continue to prosper.”

“If there be one fact more important than another,”

said Reginald Woodford, "and which I think we ought to remember on this occasion, it is the kind and unobtrusive manner in which our agent has advanced the interests of this estate. In using the term 'our agent' I embody in it both Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, for I tell you candidly that I am gradually becoming convinced of the fact, that a man who has a good and prudent wife by his side, will always be found best prepared to grapple with the difficulties of life, and to secure the most complete success. I have also been pleased with the ring of that word Our—'OUR AGENT;' for whether we look at him from a tenant's or from a labourer's point of view, he is equally 'Our Agent,' as if he were paid by us instead of by the landlord. I have always considered him a fair arbitrator between us, and I am sure we all hope that he and his wife may long continue amongst us, to aid us by their friendly counsels, in promoting the three-fold interest in the land to which my father has already made reference. I am pleased to tell you that I am taking a greater interest than ever in farming. We all know that it is not a very profitable business, but I still think it may be made more profitable than it now is. I know that I am following two good farmers, and if I can improve upon their work I shall have something to be proud of. But this you know, that I shall always be glad of any hints from you, and whenever I succeed well enough for you to take hints from me, I shall feel proud for you to do so."

"I hope you will not consider me as not belonging to your fold," said General Wyndham, "but I feel so interested in your proceedings on this estate that I am bound to tell you so. I am very hopeful that on my own property, the good examples of this estate may be



successfully copied. My agent, Mr. Webster, is proceeding with the improvements on my place, very much on the same lines on which you have seen them carried out around you. I am very glad to see that he has not only adopted my nephew's opinions, but that he has done something more than this, for he has put them into practice, by rendering himself more complete for duty by taking to himself a very prudent and sensible wife. I may even go beyond this, and tell you that they have settled down very comfortably on the Chesterton Towers Estate, and that they already are quite at home with the property and most of the good people upon it. I only hope that they will succeed as well as the 'Our Agent' on this estate has done, and I shall then often think of the happy relationships I have seen on the Holt Castle Estate, as existing between all interested in the soil. May great prosperity attend you all, and may we never be very far in the rear."

"I should very much like, before we part to-day," said Mr. Holmes, "to express the great pleasure it is to me to find that 'Our Agent' has so fully secured your approval. It throws upon my wife and myself the pleasing duty of still greater efforts in the future, but the encouragement which has been given will strengthen us for that duty. At any rate we shall labour so that the threefold bond of union, between the landlord, the tenant, and the labourer, may at all times be gaining strength amidst the increasing prosperity of the agricultural interest."

In accordance with the custom of previous years, Mrs. Woodford again invited the wives and elder daughters of the tenantry to a conference at the Castle. It was

most gratifying to her to see how thoroughly the movement had succeeded, for with very few exceptions, the invited guests had the pleasure of reporting some very good progress. All tended to confirm the view which Mrs. Woodford had long held, that there was nothing so very exceptional in the success of the work on the Abbotts Farm, but that it could, by the use of proper means, be secured elsewhere. Many of the most severe critics in the early days of the movement had secured equally successful results, and had consequently become the strongest advocates for the extension of the work. The gathering was all the more agreeable, because of the general report of good work successfully carried out, and in each case resulting in decided advantages to the tenant, by reason of the improvement in the character and strength of the labourers in his employ. The spirit of insubordination, which had been so long looked upon as independence on the part of the labourer, had disappeared, and feelings of respect and esteem were gradually becoming established in its place.

"I hope, Florence," said the General to his heiress, "I hope you are interested in this work amongst the tenants' wives, which my sister has rendered so successful. Have you ever taken part in the work in any way?"

"I have never taken any share in the actual work, uncle," said Florence Woodford, "but I have watched it with great interest. To be candid, I feel somewhat shy lest I should be thought intrusive."

"Depend upon it, my dear girl," said the General, "that although your intentions are right enough, you are labouring under a mistake. I should so much like to see you personally interested in the work; for if you once

break through the ice, you will enjoy helping in it as much as any one. I do not want my Florence to be the only one on the Holt Castle Estate who is looking on, and watching the results accomplished by others."

"I am perfectly willing to become a worker, and a zealous worker, if I may," said Florence, "and I only hesitated for the reason I have already named to you."

"I am delighted to hear it, Florence," said the General, "for the tendency of this movement, is clearly in the direction of each one of us taking his and her proper sphere of duty. We have grievously erred in the past in looking upon ladies too much as the mere ornaments of society. Bless you, I believe we shall see that their influence has been sadly undervalued. To-morrow, if all is well, we will call upon the better half of 'Our Agent,' and in my opinion it is no bad compliment to her husband thus to describe her."

CHAPTER XXX.

New Duties—Youthful Teachers—A Woman's Ideal of Female Character in its Noblest Form—The Emblem of the Three-fold Interest in the Land—Another Pledge of Union—The Closing Scene.


“Woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
Sweet love were slain, whose dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in long years liker they must grow :

* * * * *
Till at the last she set herself to man
As perfect music unto noble words :

* * * * *
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other, e'en as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men,
Then springs the crowning race of humankind !”

ACCORDING to the arrangement made, General Wyndham called upon Mrs. Holmes, accompanied by Florence Woodford.

“I have an especial favour to ask of you, Mrs. Holmes,” said the General, “and I do not doubt but that the sincere friendship subsisting between your father and myself, will induce you to grant it. I may tell you that



Florence is to succeed to the Chesterton Towers property. Some very high authority says that 'property has its duties as well as its rights,' but the more I see of the practical working of the care of an estate, the more I am brought to the conclusion, that whether it be the landlord, the agent, the tenant, or the labourer, woman's help is needed, for enabling the duties of each one of those positions to be properly performed. And I say we must all be ready to take up our several portions of the work, like so many links in the chain. Florence has watched with great interest all that has been done here, but I want her to be prepared to take her part thoroughly well when she comes to her own property, and I want you to help her to do so. In fact it will be a great favour to me if you will do so."

"I will certainly meet your wish, General Wyndham," said Janet, "and it will be a great pleasure to me to do my best to carry it out. I thoroughly agree with you in the views you express as to woman's influence, although ladies are of course obliged to show some caution even in supporting this truth; but when you appeal to me by a reference to my father's memory, and on behalf of your niece, I have no right to screen even this truth. I have watched with intense interest the work proceeding upon this estate, and my own conviction is, that in each and all the duties of life it is not good for man to be alone."

"The fact is, to put it very plainly," said the General, "the man who stands alone is very much like a fellow with one arm, who would of course often find the advantage of the second arm. I only wonder how ever I have got on so well, having been a bachelor through a


tolerably long life; but mine has been a life devoted to the sword rather than to the ploughshare, and this may account for it. The future owner of Chesterton Towers will have to do her duty to the property better than the present. How say you, Florence?"

"I will strive to do my duty, Uncle," said Florence, "but we will have no comparisons made. I shall be very pleased to place myself under your guidance, Mrs. Holmes, and follow Reginald's example."

"My advice to you," said Janet, "will be to look to the families of the workmen on the Abbotts Farm, which as you know is in your brother's occupation, and see something of the every-day life of these well-to-do labourers. Then it would be well to see some of those who have not been advanced so far. For instance, I have promised Mrs. Walsh of the Lesser Coombe Farm, to help her start the work on her husband's farm. I shall drive over in a few days' time, and probably you will like to come with me."

"Yes, indeed I shall be very pleased to do so," said Florence Woodford. "I do so wish you would make me your lieutenant for a time, and, instead of doing the work yourself, see that I do it for you. That would be so very nice for me, would it not, Uncle?"

"You will be putting yourself under Mrs. Holmes' command," said the General, "just as I was under her father's command. He saved my life, and gave me a fairly useful future, whilst she will render your life useful in another class of duty. We will consider this as so arranged, and I heartily thank you, Mrs. Holmes, for your kindness. I suppose these are your little boys returning from a walk?"



"They are coming back from the Leaside School," said Janet, "and they generally get an escort to see them safely home."

"Well, my lads," said the General, "so you have plenty of company to bring you home."

"Yes, sir," said Horace, "they come up with us, and I think it is because they like us to tell them some pretty tales after the school work is all over."

"And where do you get all your pretty tales from?" asked General Wyndham.

"Mamma always tells us some tales when we ask her," said Charlie, "and so we are quite ready for them."

"Now tell me the tale you have told them this morning," said the General.


Taking Charlie on his knee, Horace, standing by his side, told in simple language the history of George Moore and of his son Will, and of their visit to see them, all of which is already well known to the reader.

"And what did the boys think of it?" asked the General.

"Oh, we have all promised to try and do the same," said Horace and Charlie.

"Well, well," said the General, "go on and prosper. Try your best to be good boys, for I see that you are on the right track for doing much good work early in life."


"And now, Mrs. Holmes," said General Wyndham in leaving, "many months will probably elapse before I return to Holt Castle, but be sure of this—I value very highly your promised help to my niece, and I leave her under your guidance with every confidence."



On their return to the Castle the incidents of the morning, and the arrangements for the future, were fully discussed by the several members of the family, all of whom were present.

"You are most fortunate, Woodford," said the General, "in having the agency of your estate so well carried out. Look at the details where you will, each and all appear to me, to blend together with perfect harmony. Take even the circumstances of this morning. With the most perfect unselfishness, Mrs. Holmes is pleased to help Florence, and whilst she is doing this on the one hand, she is training her own children to sow some precious lessons of truth amongst the other children of their school, and what is more, she gives them the seed to sow. Her father was a noble-minded fellow as ever lived, but she must have had a good mother. Her life, so far as it came under my observation during the latter portion of Colonel Webster's time, differed but little from that of most women of her own rank and position; but we must judge of her by her children, herein is the true test, for these are the results produced. If Charlie Webster and his wife follow out upon my estate, even a fair portion of the judicious control which is here exercised by 'Our Agent,' I shall have cause to be thankful, not only for my own sake, but also for Florence."

"I have not the slightest doubt respecting the manner in which Mr. Webster will discharge his duty upon your property, Robert," said Mrs. Woodford. "Ladies, you know, look upon all these matters somewhat differently to gentlemen, and it is very desirable that they should do so; but from the occasion of the fire in this



house, down to the present time, his life, so far as I have ever heard, has been distinguished by a steady perseverance in the performance of the duties of his position, regardless of self. Now, I do think that a thoroughly unselfish man must be a treasure, and I shall be greatly surprised if you do not find him so on your estate. Personally I am very glad that Florence is going under Mrs. Holmes' guidance, so that she may familiarise her mind with those conditions and circumstances, under which a lady may render help upon a property, judiciously and with discretion. If any one can give her prudent guidance, I readily admit that Mrs. Holmes can do so, and what is more, I am quite sure she will. But I must say one word for 'her lord and master,' for in valuing her good qualities—and I also admit they are great—you gentlemen appear to me to award the praise unequally, and if she knew it she would be the first to protest against it. Her love is of that character which casts out all thought of rivalry, and you will always find that she is far less anxious to display her own powers of mind, than to secure a desirable result. Women are not, as a rule, particularly disposed to praise their own sex, but I will say this for her, that in her daily life she appears to me to realise as fully as any woman can, Wordsworth's ideal, when he said—

'The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill !
A perfect woman nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command.
And yet a spirit, still and bright,
With something of an angel light.'

I hope that when Ernest and I return from the south France, and you, Robert, come and meet us here again,

that we shall see Florence progressing in the same direction."

"Possibly," said Reginald Woodford, "an improvement may then be observed in some one else besides Florence. At the last Audit Dinner, I spoke as plainly as a bachelor well could, of the practical advantage of having a good wife, but it did not appear to cause any surprise, hence, before our party breaks up to-day, I may as well say, that as I do not consider myself an exception to the rule we are all agreed upon, I have been taking time by the forelock. If I gain the lady's consent by the time of your return, I will then tell you all about it, but I can now only add that she is unconsciously preparing herself, so that she will be quite ready for duty, and she will add grace even to this grand old mansion."

"Name, name," was called on all sides.

"I can only say, she resides in the south," said Reginald.

"Name, name," was again called, and just at this moment Mr. Holmes' name was reported as wishing to see the Squire.

"As I know the business on which Mr. Holmes has called," said Reginald, "I think you will find it desirable for him to see you whilst we are here all together, rather than that he should see you elsewhere."

Mr. Holmes was accordingly ushered in, and addressing himself to Mr. Woodford, said—

"I have been deputed by the tenants and labourers of this estate, as well as by their wives and children, to beg that Mrs. Woodford and you will accept from

them the silver loving cup entrusted to my care. I desire also to couple my wife's name and my own with these already mentioned. The feeling has been general amongst all upon this estate, that before you commence your journey, some slight expression of our feelings should be given, as to the manner in which your help has always been so kindly extended towards all interested in this property. I may perhaps be allowed to point out that the trefoil forms the chief ornament embossed upon this cup, and it has been advisedly chosen, to illustrate the three-fold interest in the land, which you have always so carefully considered. Thus, whilst each of the three leaves has a separate and individual existence, it is only as these are bound together in one common stem, that either of the three can flourish. It is our hope that you, sir, and Mrs. Woodford may long live in the enjoyment of health and happiness, surrounded by a prosperous tenantry, and by labourers who are happy in their homes."

Whilst the loving cup was being examined, preparations were made for "wetting it" in due form.

"I do not know," said the Squire, "that I have ever been more surprised or more pleased, than by this unexpected evidence of the kindly regard and the good fellowship existing on this estate. We desire you to give our sincere thanks to each and every contributor to this splendid cup, which I hope will long remain an heirloom in my family. The choice of the trefoil appears to me to be most appropriate, as an emblem of our individual, but still our united interests. The first toast I shall ask you all to join me in drinking from this loving cup, and the toast which I hope will

THE THREE-FOLD INTEREST IN THE LAND. 237

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